

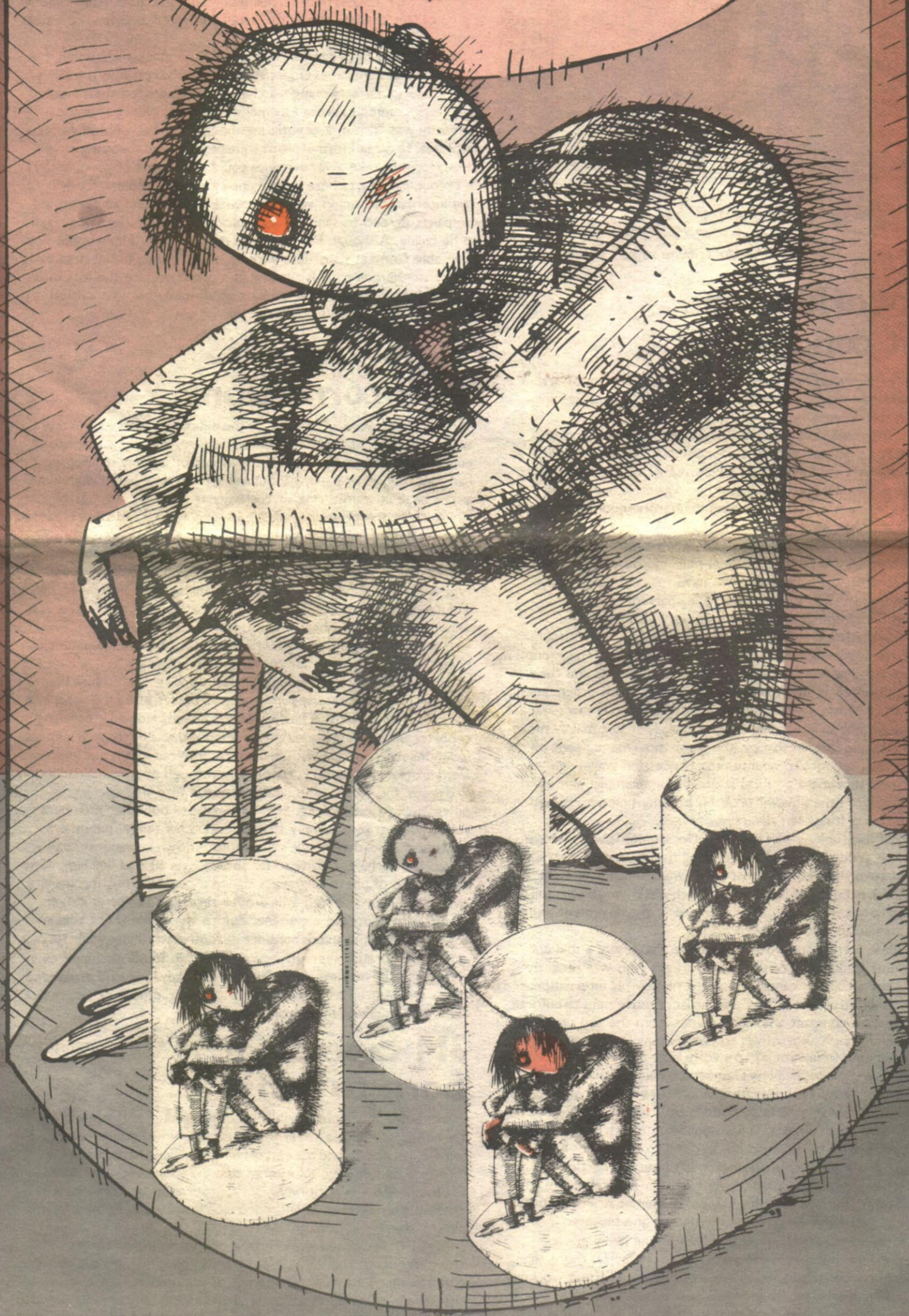
Rank and file forces union leaders to confront management in bitter strike.



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CANNED

in
Watsonville



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INSIDE LABOR

By David Moberg



Chicago Tribune strikers walk the line.

Anthony Palucci

Networking to fight concessions

Solidarity has always been the labor movement's grand moral principle and main source of power. But solidarity has taken its lumps recently in this country.

No one thing will reverse that. But on the first weekend of December a new national network of local union presidents and active individual unionists was formed to provide mutual assistance to unions on the front lines. National Rank-and-File Against Concessions (NRFAC) grew out of support among Minnesota union leaders for striking meatpackers at Geo. A. Hormel Co. in Austin, Minn. (see *In These Times* Aug. 7). The group's chair, Steelworker Dave Foster, grievance chair at the North Star mini-mill, and others contacted local officials around the country who have resisted concessions. Often, like Local P-9 in Austin, they have sparred with their international union officers over strategy as well.

Self-proclaimed rank-and-file labor groups come and go with some regularity, rarely gaining great strength or staying power. This group hopes to avoid that fate by basing itself on local unions and their officials—thus insuring more clout and legitimacy with other union officials than if it simply assembled all interested union members—and by focusing on one aim: fighting concessions. That will mainly mean offering strike support. In theory, the labor movement needs much more than such support to counter the concession wave—an economic program and a political strategy, for example. But in practice, narrowing the aims will probably broaden union participation and minimize any fringy left diversions.

Roughly 30 local unions—and dozens of local union leaders—have endorsed the group, with support coming mainly from industrial unions that have suffered the most take-away demands. Nearly 500 people attended the founding meeting, which was strong on the spirit that local union actions could revitalize the labor movement, but weak on particulars about how to do it.

A few ideas were bounced around. Dave Patterson, a militant Canadian district director of the Steelworkers who was recently defeated after an all-out campaign against him by his international officers, recounted efforts in the Canadian labor movement to enforce a no-concessions compact among all unions from the top down, to educate members on alternatives to concessions (banks reducing interest payments, for example), to involve large numbers of workers in bargaining, and to use the New Democratic Party (Canada's labor-based social democratic party). Other tactics suggested ranged from part-time or "sharing" strikes (variations on the idea of selective or "guerrilla" strikes rather than drawn-out wars of attrition) or confrontations with banks, stockholders and executives (such as the Pittsburgh clergy and steelworker tactics of putting rotting fish in bank safety deposit boxes or disrupting church services in wealthy neighborhoods). But on the whole, the group seemed oriented toward old-fashioned strike support: publicity, money and pickets.

Until it can hire a staff organizer, NRFAC will likely grow haphazardly. Foster thinks it can sustain support for no more than one national campaign at a time—now the Austin Hormel workers. NRFAC will publish a monthly newspaper, encourage unions in a particular industry to formulate bargaining strategies together and organize local union coalitions for strike support work (like existing coalitions in Long Beach, Calif., Toledo, Ohio and Boston).

"I don't see this issue of concessions as something you use to bring people in and foist a whole lot of other issues on them," Foster said. "We're willing to take on international unions, but not take on another 45 good—or not-so-good—causes." Despite their official intent not "to single out particular leaders or international unions" for criticism, many of the initial sponsors are frustrated with their international's leadership. (Ironically, some rank-and-file participants complained that

the local officials weren't sufficiently open and democratic.) NRFAC will need to add to this natural disgruntled constituency more locals—such as the Chicago region of the clothing and textile workers that endorsed NRFAC on the eve of the conference—that share their anti-concession views but are not antagonistic to their own national leaders. Then NRFAC could become a significant aid to a union renaissance and promote more cross-union solidarity.

Hormel stalls as beef continues

Austin Hormel meatpackers, whose efforts inspired the new organization, have been on strike since August 17. Now the local and its Corporate Campaign consultants have launched an appeal to unions and individuals to "adopt a family," pledging support so that a striker's family can withstand financial pressures. At the same time it has been defending its pressure tactics on First Bank, an intimate financial partner of Hormel, in hearings on a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) complaint that the union's protest at the bank is an unlawful secondary boycott. The union maintains that the interpretation of the law by the regional NLRB director—forbidding any mention of the First Bank connection—strips unions of basic First Amendment rights of free speech. While the issue is litigated, protests continue more sedately.

Negotiations between Hormel and P-9 continued last week, but Local P-9 President James Guyette insists that the company is stalling and not seriously bargaining—a charge that appeared substantiated by recent comments from Hormel's chief legal officer that the company was "not in a negotiating mode." P-9 has wanted to take its pickets to other Hormel plants still operating and shut them down. Since Hormel's take-away demands could affect those plants over the next couple of years, there is apparently growing sympathy for P-9. The international union, which has criticized P-9 and its corporate campaign, agreed to sanction such pickets if negotiations appeared to be failing. Although P-9 insists its reports show Hormel has not been able to meet its orders with its other plants, business sources claim that the company is running at a profit despite the loss of its newest, biggest plant. If the pickets go up elsewhere on critical production days, profits could shrivel.

Typographers seek corrections

If testimony were still needed on the difficulties of striking in these times, *Chicago Tribune* typographers, mailers and press operators could offer it. Around 1,000 strikers walked off last July 18 after most had gone months or years without a new contract. The *Tribune* wants a free hand in transferring or reclassifying workers. Typographers, like many in the printing trades, had long ago agreed to unhindered introduction of new technology in exchange for lifetime job guarantees. Union members are willing to transfer to other departments, but insist that such shifts must be negotiated and typesetters do not want to displace union allies in other departments. The unions say that the *Tribune* also wants to circumvent the 250 experienced typographers who had worked on call and instead wants to hire inexperienced, young workers to train for new equipment it plans to introduce in order to pay lower wages.

As the strike started, the *Tribune*, flagship of a media empire that has been profitable despite some recent troubles, hired the notorious law firm of King Ballow & Little, which has been involved in breaking reporter and printing trades unions at more than a dozen newspapers. It continued to operate with strikebreakers hired locally and imported from around the country, reportedly through Southern Production Programs, Inc. (SPPI), an Oklahoma-based firm that specializes in newspaper strikebreaking. SPPI's newspaper publisher members reportedly agree to supply strikebreakers for fellow publishers.

Strikers claim the *Tribune*'s circulation is down in response to their boycott, but the company so far shows little sign of flinching. One small group of photo-engravers signed a contract, but the mailers overwhelmingly rejected a final offer recently. Teamster drivers continue to cross the picketline. Before the strike there was a suggestion that the unions consider disruptive strategies while staying on the job, but such alternatives were never seriously discussed, even though it was evident that the *Tribune* was ready for such a prolonged battle and—given its provocative transfers and policy changes last summer—might even welcome a strike.

3M tape plant: born to run?

In his song "My Hometown" Bruce Springsteen poignantly sings of the closing of a textile mill in his hometown. Now Springsteen, along with Willie Nelson and the cast of *Hill Street Blues*, have joined Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 8-760 in that same town—Freehold, N.J.—in petitioning 3M Corporation to keep open its professional quality audio and video tape factory that is scheduled for closing starting in January.

The 450 threatened workers have been working seven-day weeks and overtime at the 25-year-old plant producing high-quality tapes that command a steady 50 percent of the market. But because of that schedule, 3M hasn't done the necessary modernization. And since its non-union consumer tape plants in Minnesota and North Dakota are not as busy as 3M had hoped, the company is shutting down the Freehold plant and moving operations. More than one-fifth of the workers have already suffered at least one previous plant shutdown, including the one Springsteen sang about. There is no indication 3M is losing money at this plant, and it is not asking workers for concessions. It simply says it is not "cost efficient" to stay there. Union President Stanley Fischer has devised a positive, upbeat plea rather than threats or a boycott, hoping 3M will listen to "the Boss," even if it ignores the workers.



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By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

THE MACHINE AS YOU KNOW IT is dead," exclaimed Mayor Harold Washington following last month's agreement on a remap plan for this city's 50 wards. The plan, designed to remedy an earlier map that was drawn to dilute the voting strength of blacks and Hispanics, could shift the balance of power in city council and provide Washington with the political support he needs to implement programs promised during his campaign.

Washington made a similar prediction about the machine's demise in his 1983 inaugural speech, but he soon realized he had jumped the gun a bit. City Council members of the old machine were still kicking and, led by Aldermen Edward Vrdolyak and Edward Burke, used race as an organizing tool to marshal a majority of 29 aldermen in opposition to both Washington and the 21 aldermen who signed on to his reformist agenda. Because of that numerical superiority, the forces of the "two Eddies" have stymied virtually every major program proposed by the mayor and declined to take action on dozens of his executive appointments.

The remap accord may finally end that destructive struggle. The new ward boundaries represent a compromise agreement between the city corporation counsel, black and Hispanic plaintiffs whose suit prompted the action and the city council, which until recently opposed any boundary changes. The map was redrawn to restore the percentage of blacks and Hispanics that would exist in seven wards (the 15th, 18th, 22nd, 25th, 26th, 31st and 37th wards) had they not been gerrymandered in 1981 to assure white control of the council.

All seven wards are represented by members of the anti-administration bloc, but because of the remap three now contain black majorities and four have Hispanic majorities. "For the first time in the history of this city, Hispanic and black residents will be able to elect candidates of their choice, and the wards will be structured commensurate with their population," Washington said. "This is a revolution."

Special elections

Whether that revolution will occur in time to benefit his administration depends on the ruling of U.S. District Judge Charles Norgle, who will soon decide if special elections should be held and when. Washington and attorneys for the plaintiffs want elections held no later than March 1986, a date they said is ideal since it coincides with statewide primaries.

"Winning a new map without new elections would be a hollow victory and a continuation of the injustices perpetrated by 'the 29,' which gerrymandered the map to limit black and Hispanic voting power," said Jesus Garcia, a Washington ally and a probable aldermanic candidate for one of the new wards with a Hispanic majority.

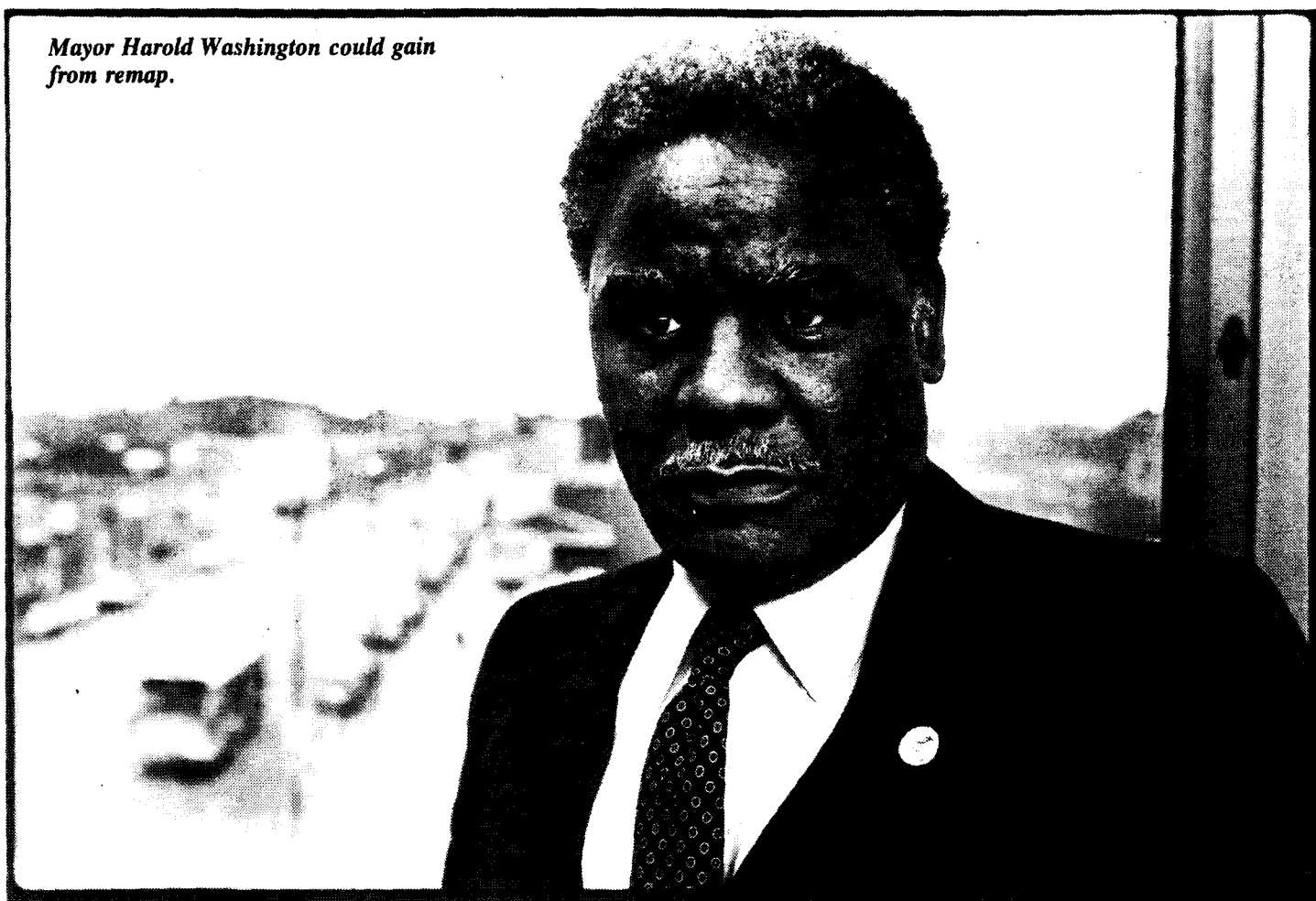
Members of the majority bloc said spec-

"For the first time in history, Hispanic and black Chicagoans will be able to elect candidates of their choice." —Washington

ial elections would be too expensive and wouldn't allow enough time to organize petitions and launch campaigns. Also, since new aldermen would be elected only about a year before the regular 1987 aldermanic race, they are unnecessary.

"My plan does not require special elections," said William Harte, an attorney for

Mayor Harold Washington could gain from remap.



Marc Pokempner

Chicago remap may signal death knell for machine

the majority bloc who insisted the redrawn wards conform to boundaries he outlined in his own remap plan. "The percentage of change in most of the wards is just not significant enough to warrant all the effort" and expense.

But Harte's position is so weak that it's even opposed by Assistant Attorney General William Bradford Reynolds, who submitted a brief arguing in favor of special elections. The League of Women Voters and the Better Government Association also filed a "friend of the court brief" urging early special elections. Reynolds filed a similar complaint against the city of Los Angeles (see accompanying story).

"In four of the newly drawn wards there is no alderman residing within the boundaries," said Judson Miner, attorney for the black plaintiffs, emphasizing the need for prompt action. "It's untenable to suggest that aldermen who now live outside the black and Hispanic communities are going to be expected to vigorously press the interests of the residents within those wards when it comes to important matters," he said.

Life or death

Matthew Piers, deputy corporation counsel, said Harte's pro-remap posture is belied by his opposition to special elections. "This is a life-or-death struggle for the regular Democrats of Cook County," Piers explained. "They've already lost the mayor's seat and now they see control of city council slipping away and they fear for their political lives. There's really no great mystery why they're against holding special elections. For them to couch their objections in all of those disingenuous arguments makes them look kind of ridiculous."

Washington's supporters have consistently charged the majority bloc with sabotaging the image of Chicago in order to project it as a city that is deteriorating under a black mayor's rule. They are simply trying to play on primitive racial prejudices by portraying the mayor as just another incompetent black man, charged Lu Palmer, head of Chicago's Black United Communities and one of the black plaintiffs in the remap suit.

"That's why they're so diligently attempting to thwart all of his policies," Palmer said. "But all we have to win is four of the

seven wards in question and the council split would be reduced to 25-25. This would allow the mayor to cast the deciding vote himself."

Although most observers think it unlikely, there is a possibility that Norgle will decide that no special election is needed before the regular aldermanic contest in February 1987. If the judge makes that decision, the mayor would probably be plagued by the majority bloc's obstructionism until his term's end. But some of Washington's strategists don't think that's such a bad thing. They have argued that such a blatant display of malevolence by his white opposition may be the most effective way to mobilize a large voter turnout for his re-election try.

Return of apathy

"If the mayor wins all of his battles too

soon, there may be something of a let-down during the election and people are liable to return to their long tradition of political disinterest," said a high-ranking aide, recalling the problems of voter apathy that afflicted Chicago's blacks before Washington's crusading campaign of 1983.

Some also doubt that special elections would prompt an automatic council shift in Washington's favor. Since Hispanics have voting majorities in four of the redrawn wards, they could hold the balance of power in a new city council alignment and seek to exploit that position as independent powerbrokers.

"We feel that if you're 100 percent aligned with any political camp they're going to take you for granted," said Rep. Juan Soliz, a state legislator who will probably run for alderman in one of the newly designed wards—probably the 25th. Soliz began his political career as a Washington ally, but later edged closer to Vrdolyak. He said Hispanics should keep independent, "but at the same time make it known that we are willing to work with either camp."

Some administration supporters see Soliz's act of independence as a costly defection. "Just at the time when black and Hispanic unity could really shoot Chicago off on a progressive course, we have this kind of politically unsophisticated stuff going on," said Robert Starks, chair of the Task Force on Black Political Empowerment. "I know that some Hispanics will just say they're flexing their political muscles and they have to do it independently. I surely understand that, but they should ask themselves if it's worth the cost of putting up with racist impediments."

Raymond Romero, director of the Chicago office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and attorney for the Hispanic plaintiffs in the remap suit, agreed with Starks. He is bitterly critical of Soliz' "so-called independent" posture.

"When he was running against the machine, there was no more sympathetic case than Juan Soliz," Romero recalled. "He was the classic Don Quixote. But now, suddenly, he's turned into a Don Quixote-gone-Machiavellian. And all of this just because Vrdolyak pumped a few thousand dollars his way."

Justice Dept. sues L.A.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued the City of Los Angeles last month, contending it deliberately diluted Hispanic voting strength in a 1982 redistricting plan.

The action, signed by Assistant Attorney General William Bradford Reynolds, specifically charged the city for "a history of official discrimination," which impinged "... on the right of Spanish speaking and other language minorities to register, vote and participate in the political process."

Although nearly 28 percent of the city's population is Hispanic, there had been no Hispanics on the city council until a recent special election was won by Richard Alatorre.

Some critics of Reynolds' Justice Department claim the suit was filed both to embarrass Thomas Bradley, the city's first black mayor, and to pit the city's black and Hispanic communities against each other. But Los Angeles' Hispanic leadership was virtually unanimous in hailing the Justice Department's action. —S.M.

INSHORT

Beth Maschinot

The Pentagon's whitewash

The International Alliance of Atomic Veterans (IAVV), the National Commission of Radiation Victims (NCRV) and several other radiation victims organizations are busy lobbying Congress to repeal an amendment prohibiting them from suing nuclear weapons manufacturers for any radiation-related disease. Introduced by Sen. John Warner (R-VA) and attached to an Energy Department appropriations bill, the Warner amendment passed the Senate in September. Since then it has proved to be the bane of veterans who were exposed to deadly doses of radiation and are now suffering from a high rate of cancer, leukemia and other radiogenic diseases. Unable to sue the government, and with the Veterans Administration only compensating 15 of 5,194 veterans who filed claims in the last several years, suing the corporations had seemed the veterans' last hope.

But according to Cooper Brown of the NCRV, more than 400 cases have been dropped by courts around the country since the Warner amendment was passed. Brown claims that the Defense Department (DOD), and the Energy and Justice Departments have spent about a half a million dollars in lawyers fees and additional staffing to stop each case.

The atomic veterans point to the case of Jean Ralph as evidence that the Pentagon continues to try to whitewash medical findings in order to undermine the veterans' insistence that radiation exposure can cause disease. Ralph's husband died in 1978 after being exposed to residual radiation as a member of a Nagasaki "clean-up crew" in 1945. He died of multiple myeloma, a rare bone marrow cancer. Doing her own survey, Ralph found that 26 of the 30,000 people sent to "clean up" after the Nagasaki bomb also had the disease—a much higher rate than average. "The Pentagon tried to whitewash the case," said Ralph. "But they did a lousy job and the Office of Technological Assessment caught them." It referred to the Department of Defense's research as "slovenly." The Pentagon had paid \$37,000 to the National Academy of Science to undermine the case, according to Ralph. She still has not received compensation for her husband's disease.

The veterans are now placing their hope in a bill introduced by Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) that would make it easier to be compensated by the Veterans Administration. It would also provide money for a thoroughgoing epidemiological survey to shed more light on the connection between radiation exposure and disease.

But the same type of bill has been killed in committee each of the last five years. A letter from the general counsel for the Department of Defense to the chair of the House Veterans Affairs committee notes that if the bill was passed "it would create the unmistakable impression that exposure to low level ionizing radiation is a significant health hazard when available medical and scientific research simply does not support this contention. This mistaken impression has the potential to be seriously damaging to every aspect of the Department of Defense's nuclear weapons and nuclear propulsion programs." IAAV Director Anthony Guarisco agrees that the veterans' claims challenge the heart of the Pentagon's programs. In testimony for the repeal of the Warner amendment Guarisco said that "the bottom line is this: \$3 trillion has been spent on nuclear weapons and delivery systems since 1945. The military lied to us about the effects of radiation in 1946, and they have continued to lie to us for 40 years."

Support for the ANC

Last week's meeting of the international World Council of Churches (WCC) in Zimbabwe led to the adoption of a powerfully worded anti-apartheid resolution—the strongest that the organization, which represents nearly 400 Protestant churches worldwide, has issued to date. The church leaders attending the conference listened to delegates from the African National Congress (ANC), 37 black and white South African ministers, heads of the National Union of mineworkers and the newly-formed South African Trade Unions who overwhelmingly suggested strong sanctions against the Botha government.

The WCC, long a catalyst for reform in the region, had decided that reform was not enough, that "only the liberation of South Africa will be sufficient," in the words of one WCC delegate. To this end their newly adopted resolution calls for Christian churches to support the ANC and other guerrilla organizations in their fight against the South African government and called for the unconditional



About 600 angry gay men, lesbians and their supporters demonstrated in front of the New York Post offices on December 1. The protesters, who shouted "No more lies!" and waved flags symbolizing the Post's reputation as a yellow journal, claimed the paper's editorial policies have promoted AIDS hysteria and prejudice against gays. The newly formed Gay and Lesbian Anti-Defamation League organized the action and urged the paper to stop printing bigoted headlines, columns and editorials.

The Feminist Women's Health Center in Portland, Ore., received an unwelcome package in the mail last week—a bomb designed to explode on opening. The bomb did no damage, however, because one of the staff members spotted unusual markings on the package and called the police to defuse it. Two other clinics—including a Planned Parenthood clinic that didn't perform abortions—and a doctor in the Portland area also received similar bombs. They were safely forewarned by the police. Nanette Falkenberg of the National Abortion Rights Action League says the bombs signal a new level of violence against pro-choice advocates. "This

is really the first time that it's clear that the intent is to kill people who work in the clinics." The Portland area clinics seem to have been specially targeted by the fanatical wing of the pro-life movement because pro-choice Sen. Bob Packwood faces a Baptist minister opposed to abortion in the upcoming Republican primary.

One more grade B actor in politics, Iowa's Fred Grand, more affectionately known as "Gopher," announced last week that he'll have a shot at Iowa's 6th District House seat. A maverick of Sioux City, Iowa, Republican Gopher is expected

to face Democratic incumbent Berkeley Bodell.

World peace in a hot tub. The Esalen Institute in Big Sur, Calif., used to be known for "like, you know, man, encounter groups and rolling, and was often thought to be... well, just a little self-indulgent. But Esalen is gradually changing its image. For the '80s, the humanistic center has asked Soviet representatives to participate in a program on understanding nations. And one institute director about the change. "For years Esalen was like a body without a head. Now Esalen has finally discovered its mind."

release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. It also urged involved nations not to reschedule South Africa's \$14 billion international debt. The group's closing statement was even stronger, calling for the resignation of P.W. Botha, saying, "We regard this as the most appropriate and least costly process of change, as we await a new democratic representative government in South Africa. We are sure the liberation will be liberation for all people in the country, white and black."

The WCC has eight member churches in South Africa, which represent several hundred people. The Afrikaner Reformed churches—those closest to the ruling National Party—resigned from the WCC in 1962 in the wake of an anti-apartheid stand the WCC had taken after the Sharpeville massacre.

Blood terrorism

Last week Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-CA) blasted the U.S. Public Health Service and several state governments for failing to "take necessary practical measures to protect the public and health-care professionals" from AIDS. Dannemeyer, who was last heard from in Congress when he wisecracked that God did not condone homosexuality, "otherwise he would have made an Adam and Steve"—seems intent on building his visibility by capitalizing on the AIDS crisis.

Dannemeyer argued last week that since AIDS transmittal routes are not pinned down precisely, more drastic steps need to be taken to stop the disease's spread. His package of five bills includes a proposal that would cut off revenue sharing funds to cities that fail to close gay bathhouses—a sure-fire controversy in the making. He also proposes a measure that would prohibit health care workers with diagnosed AIDS from working within the health care system. The workers would be placed on disability leave or "in a job that doesn't involve contact with already vulnerable individuals." A third bill would prohibit schoolchildren with AIDS from attending school, and ask that an alternative type of education be found. Another proposal makes it a crime for anyone with AIDS to donate blood, a necessary bill, according to the representative, because "radical sects" of homosexuals have threatened "blood terrorism"—donating infected

blood to spread AIDS if funding is not increased. The final bill would authorize health-care professionals to wear protective clothing if they treat AIDS patients—a bill that Dannemeyer says is needed because some doctors don't allow nurses to wear the protective clothing.

Mexico's shrinking land

While people in Mexico are still feeling the economic aftershocks of September's earthquake, scientists from the *Grupos Ecologistas* are warning of a gradual, yet potentially more devastating catastrophe. They recently charged that transnational cattle-raising corporations are wrecking 40 percent of Mexico's land area. The scientists say that the corporations' abuse of 80 million hectares endangers agricultural production, converts fertile land into desert and generates large disparities of wealth in the countryside.

And the cattle-raising represents no benefit for most Mexicans, adds the commission. The rangeland grazing has a very low productivity yield—only about 10 kilos of meat per hectare per year. And it sharply cuts down the production of basic food crops and angers millions of *campesinos* who see their lands being practically stripped bare.

The group charged that it was "unjust" to continue to allow "massive deforestation, the spoilation and even expulsion of entire communities in order to devote ever more land to the grazing industry." It called on the corporations to stop "sacrificing more agricultural lands to satisfy the capricious eating habits of a minority of the population—especially now that the per capita consumption of meat is lower in Mexico than in countries like Canada, Panama and Costa Rica."

The great stretches of tropical rain forest that once graced the country have now shrunk to three patches in southeastern Mexico. The richest ecosystems have been debased by cattle grazing, even the highland jungles. The Commission specified that behind the cattle grazing are multinational firms who furnish vaccines, pesticides and other necessary supplies and who sell most of their meat abroad.

This week's contributors: Bob Rudner and R. Davis

By Joan Walsh

WATSONVILLE, CA

THE SMELL OF DAMP VEGETABLES and diesel exhaust hangs over the picketline outside Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co., one of two frozen food processing plants here struck by 1,700 workers since September. You can mark time by the steady arrival of trucks turning into the driveway, past the glaring strikers, carrying just-picked vegetables to be packed by the several hundred strikebreakers working inside the plant.

"Sometimes I don't even call this a strike, with people going in and out," notes a frustrated Lupe Barcelo, a striker with 32 years in the Watsonville plant and, like 80 percent of the workers there, a Chicana. "In Mexico, you have a line and that's it—no-body gets in. The plant is shut down."

Yet this is an uncommonly militant—and by some measures successful—strike nonetheless. Since the companies slashed wages by up to 50 percent to precipitate the walkout September 9, only a handful of Teamsters Local 912 workers have returned to their jobs, and the struck firms have had no better luck recruiting from Watsonville's Chicano community. The firms are running at 25 percent capacity with workers bused in from Salinas and Gilroy. The strikers are living on \$55 a week in strike benefits, donated food and anger.

A phalanx of restraining orders has limited the militance: no more than four strikers are allowed at the plant gate; seven can stand across the street; only three can try to discourage scabs from boarding the companies' buses, from a distance of 200 feet away. More than 100 strikers have been arrested or cited for strike misconduct, including a warehouse arson that owner Richard Shaw, Inc., the second struck firm, blames on the union—and strikers blame on Shaw.

Picketline decorum is maintained by a police patrol that circles the Watsonville plant every few minutes. I was interviewing four strikers at the plant gate when another crossed the street to join the discussion. On its next round the patrol car lurched to a stop and two young, very Anglo officers jumped out to inform us we were breaking the law—now there were five strikers where there should only be four. They talked to me, not to the workers, from behind their matching aviator sunglasses, and returned to their car only when we sullenly moved the discussion across the street.

But the police hostility is discordant in this otherwise sympathetic town. Watsonville is a world away from the epochal cannery and fieldworker strikes of the mid-'30s, when sheriffs, at the behest of powerful growers and packers, "deputized" the angry white citizenry so that vigilante groups could run strikers out of town. Here one out of four residents is either a striker or dependent on one. The canneries and processing plants provide the biggest paycheck in the area, and people know a broken strike could encourage other employers' to slash wages and benefits. And the Chicano and Mexican workers' struggle against the white business establishment—and police—has become a matter of civic pride.

So driving by the picket lines, many people wave and honk their horns to show support. Public opinion won't break this strike. In fact, it may be the decisive element in sustaining it. With the season just about over, the plants will soon be all but idle, and there's not much to bring management back to the bargaining table until March. It could be a long, cold winter on the picketline.

Provoking the union

The strike was officially provoked when Shaw and Watsonville imposed drastic wage cuts on their employees, who had been working without a contract since their old agreement expired in August. At Watsonville Canning, wages for unskilled, "bracket five" workers were cut from a base of \$6.66 an hour to \$4.25, and many workers were reclassified to deny them seniority increases or to drop them out of a higher

Slashed wages and production speed-ups precipitated Watsonville's uncommonly militant state.



Paula Cruz Takash

Veggie barons try union freeze-out

bracket. The highly paid mechanics' workforce, for instance, was cut in half, and the remaining workers were reassigned to unskilled positions.

But the wage cut was only the final provocation in what looks like a management strategy to break the union. First the companies implemented the benefit cuts, work-rule changes and union restrictions that Teamster negotiators had rejected before contract talks broke off. Management began stepping up production quotas, requir-

Public opinion won't break this strike—it may be decisive in sustaining it.

ing that workers chop 20 heads of broccoli per minute, for instance, or pack 20 boxes a minute. Some of the older workers who couldn't keep up were fired.

Others with seniority were terminated in different ways. One woman lost her job for eating a piece of cauliflower she was cutting. Lupe Barcelo was fired for punching in a co-worker's time card. "My supervisor called me in and said I was fired, no warning, no nothing. I had 23 years seniority. She told me not to bother finishing the day, to leave the plant immediately. But I was just one person. Everyday there was some new rule, somebody else getting fired. And some ladies just quit—they couldn't put up with it."

The workplace harassment was conducted against a backdrop of new restrictions on the union. The firms stopped forwarding dues to the union; instead, they paid them to the workers in a separate check. Visitation rights were eliminated; instead, union representatives had to pre-arrange an appointment to visit the shop floor.

"They were trying to shove us out on strike," says Local 912 business agent Leon Ellis. "They implemented 53 takeaways. They'd have come in and taken a crap on [Local Secretary-Treasurer] Dick King's desk in order to push us out."

Ellis' picturesque assessment wasn't meant as an indictment—he's been allied with the controversial King administration—but it's an apt description of how the frustrated rank and file felt Teamster leadership was responding to the management's assault. "The union wasn't doing much," says Angelo Rubio, a pickline captain with 18 years at Watsonville. "They trusted management too much."

Militant strikers and staid industry executives agree on one thing: the relationship between Local 912 and Watsonville Canning can best be described as "sweetheart." Local 912 Secretary-Treasurer King, with the union since 1952, grew up in Watsonville and owns a bar next door to the union hall. King has publicly boasted that his long-time ties with the local business establishment—notably Watsonville Canning owner Mort Console—make him the ideal Teamsters leader to foster good labor-management relations.

Three years ago the Watsonville management came to the union pleading poverty and sought a 40-cents-an-hour wage reduction for bracket five workers, breaking parity with the rest of the processing industry. Workers turned down the contract, but after the pact's rejection many felt union leadership neither worked for a better settlement nor prepared them for a strike.

"Both the union and the owners were pushing us, scaring us about what it meant to reject the contract again," says Gloria Betancourt, a 23-year veteran now running for Local president. When management put forward the same offer, a majority of workers rejected it, but fell short of the two-thirds needed for a strike vote. So the pact was half-heartedly accepted. But those who had militantly opposed it felt vindicated soon after, when Watsonville Canning advertised to the public that the firm now had a leg up on its competitors—because it had

IN THESE TIMES DEC. 18-24, 1985 5 lowered its wages, it could sell its product cheaper than other firms.

Today industry competitors as well as strikers say that pact set the stage for the current strike. Preparing for the sales bonanza that its lower prices were expected to bring, Watsonville Canning, the nation's largest processor, doubled its capacity, completing a \$750,000 plant renovation last year. Meanwhile, Richard Shaw, Inc., hurt by stiff competition from Watsonville and overcapacity in the industry generally, decided to go after wage cuts as well. The frozen food industry association opted for seeking a wage freeze instead.

"Watsonville Canning created this fight and the union was party to it when they accepted that lower contract three years ago," an anonymous industry executive told the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* last month. "Shaw should not be on strike. But they broke ranks. They were not willing to wait and be part of a group with strength and more numbers."

The 1982 concessions also convinced many rank-and-file workers that union leaders weren't ready to fight for them. So when Watsonville and Shaw began implementing their takeaways after contract talks stalled, some union members began pushing leadership to prepare for a strike.

"It seemed like everyone would be fired before the strike could start," says Gloria Betancourt. Workers began milling around the union hall, in a virtual occupation, to make their frustration known. They found assistance in the small Watsonville chapter of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

With the advantage of bilingual leadership and some dedicated Chicano support, TDU had posed a credible political challenge to the conservative Anglo leadership of King and associates. Chapter founder Frank Barteke won 44 percent of the vote when he challenged King for the secretary-treasurer post three years ago. In the current strike, even Ellis credits TDU with "firing up" workers for a long walkout.

Even after the strike vote, TDU maintained the leadership role, since King was perceived as doing little to build strike support either from International Teamster officials or the local community. TDU supporters organized a Solidarity Day march and rally on October 6, which drew 2,000 people to break the injunction against mass picketing at the plants. But the event wasn't endorsed by the Local or Joint Council 7—a boycott that, given the high turnout, proved embarrassing to union leadership.

Yet the rally, which looked like a victory for the union opposition, held the seeds of its undoing. Conflicts over its planning opened a split between local TDU activists and West Coast TDU organizer from San Jose, Mike Johnston, and Manuel Diaz, who staffs the Cannery Workers Organizing Project, which operates in the San Jose TDU office.

Sectarian squabble

The internal TDU rivalry can be described as nothing but sectarian. Some local TDU leaders have Communist Party ties. The West Coast office works with the League of Revolutionary Struggle, a Marxist-Leninist sect with connections to the Latino community. Diaz and Johnston helped build Solidarity Day by bringing Watsonville strikers to meetings of Bay Area left and Latino groups and asking for their participation. But their supporters were kept off the rally program, which local TDU leader Joe Fahey now acknowledges was a mistake.

"We were worried—it was 'the San Francisco left comes to Watsonville,'" he says. "There were 150 police there and we didn't want a riot. But people got really pissed."

As a result of the exclusion, Fahey found himself accused of racism and elitism. At the same time, increased picket-line violence and the Shaw warehouse arson were being blamed on TDU militance. Attacked from the left and right, TDU was effectively discredited. Meanwhile, Diaz helped organize a strikers-only meeting, where 500 workers gathered to declare they supported neither the union establishment nor TDU,

Continued on following page

Continued from preceding page

and elected an independent strike committee. Diaz, however, has stayed central to the committee's efforts—but not as a TDU representative.

"We don't relate to Manuel as TDU," says presidential candidate Betancourt. "We told him if he was willing to help us as an organizer, fine, but we didn't want TDU." Yet Betancourt, who traveled to last month's TDU convention in Chicago and helped raise \$1,000 for the strike, is widely reported to be a TDU member herself. She denies it. "I haven't signed anything. I'm a Teamster and happy to be a Teamster."

The turf wars are of more than prurient interest because local leadership posts are up for election this month. At one time rank-and-file dissatisfaction with leadership's handling of the strike was expected to result in the ouster of the union establishment. And the militance did help to convince King not to seek re-election. But the sectarian battling has so split the opposition that mainstream Teamster candidates are expected to win easily.

Business agent Sergio Lopez, an occasionally independent King ally, is running unopposed for secretary-treasurer. He briefly had opposition from "The People's Slate," whose ticket Betancourt heads. But the nominated candidate decided against running. Betancourt is running against Leon Ellis, but is expected to split the op-

position vote with Jose Lopez, the official TDU candidate for president. "The elections are an absolute mess," says Fahey, who is running for business agent.

Not surprisingly, he holds his TDU rivals at least partly to blame. "When they got involved, some people were worried about their motives, but I wasn't—we certainly weren't able to bring Chicano support from all over California. But their style of work has been to attack all the local organizations doing strike support and replace them with local people directed by Manuel." Fahey and others point out that the League of Revolutionary Struggle is best known for similar power maneuvers within the anti-apartheid movement at UC-Berkeley last spring.

Counters Diaz, "He's just wrong. They've been saying for a while that the League came to town and took over, tried to dominate the strike. But this isn't a competition between the left groups, it's a difference in methods of work. Joe's folks just didn't take the time to consolidate their leadership, and when the strike came down, they didn't have a base."

To Watsonville TDU veteran Frank Barteke, the split is tragic, though not fatal to the strike. "What was really needed was unity, rank-and-file control and an open place to fight out differences. What was absolutely not needed was anyone believing they had the 'correct line.' Right now there are more losers than winners. People have to pull unity out of this so there are no

major defections."

On the picket line, the squabbling has translated into confusion among many workers. Most workers interviewed expressed no strong partisanship in the upcoming election, and among the women particularly there was a sense that union politics were somehow irrelevant to the course of the strike.

An impromptu discussion between a male and female striker, both Chicano, illustrated the political complexities. Promised anonymity, they volunteered their leadership preferences. He was leaning toward The People's Slate; she favored the incumbents headed by Sergio Lopez.

"Sergio is the only one in the union who ever spoke up for us at all," she noted. "The others are just workers like us—they have no experience."

Yet her co-worker countered: "You want experience—this is what the union's experience has gotten us—they cut our wages, we're here on strike. Maybe the other side can change things—we need someone who wants to do something for us." The woman shrugged. "I don't know. I don't even go over to the union hall anymore. I just stay right here on this line. That's what counts."

It's a strange contradiction, these militant women who consider themselves apolitical. It's partly cultural, but apathy also was cultivated by a male, Anglo union leadership that didn't try to relate to its overwhelmingly Chicana membership. Even the TDU chapter is disproportionately Anglo and al-

most exclusively male.

Another reason the leadership struggle seems so abstracted from the strike is that neither side has advanced a clear path to a settlement. With King mostly out of the picture, union officials led by Lopez have come around to many of the positions once considered militant—building support in the community and the broader labor movement, pressuring the Joint Council for help, attempting to stop the importation of scabs. Joint Council 7 President Chuck Mack, considered comparatively liberal, has taken a high-profile role in support.

"Spreading the strike" to other canneries and into the vegetable fields has remained strike militants' most controversial suggestion. It began as a TDU demand that was shot down by union leadership. But the week of December 9, Betancourt said some strikers would go into nearby vegetable fields and try to get farmworker support.

At this point, it's not a coordinated strategy. Sergio Lopez says the union knows nothing about it. Strikers have tried to enlist United Farm Workers (UFW) support for the notion, with little official response. UFW leader Cesar Chavez addressed a strike rally November 9 and pledged the union's assistance. But Chavez' ideas ran along the line of including Watsonville and Shaw products on the UFW's boycott list—a difficult proposition, since the processors sell to several different firms, and their products are not identified on the packaging.

Chavez aide Bobby De La Cruz says the UFW would be hard put to identify which of its members are picking or cutting vegetables that wind up at the struck plants. Says Lopez: "Cesar can't put his people out on strike." But he hopes to enlist UFW support in informational leafletting at stores that sell Watsonville or Shaw-processed products, such as the Safeway chain.

No relief

That the UFW and Teamsters—bitter enemies since the Teamster's bloody raids on UFW contracts in the early and mid-'70s—are cooperating at all is a measure of the strike's importance. It's also testimony to early labor union wisdom that cannery, packinghouse and farmworkers belonged in the same union. But the militant, Communist-led Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union that led a wave of California strikes in the '30s—chronicled in Carey McWilliams' classic *Factories in the Field*—was broken by vigilantism and red-baiting and the Teamsters filled the breach, to management's relief.

Today, Teamsters Local 912 is giving management no relief. But the question remains whether rank-and-file determination can last the winter. Watsonville and Shaw, both with product surpluses, clearly determined before the strike that they could sacrifice this season, operating at low capacity and selling off their surplus. Next season is a different story. "They can't start up again without significant defections from Watsonville," says Barteke.

Both the union leadership and the strike committee have set as their main task holding together the workforce through the winter. A strike support group has organized negotiating teams made up of local religious leaders to help strikers unable to pay rent negotiate with their landlords and avoid eviction.

On the legal front, the union has gone to court to try to win the strikers' unemployment benefits, arguing that the firms' wage cuts were so steep as to "entitle strikers to withdraw their services," says Alex Ybarrolaza, who is coordinating strike support work for Joint Council 7.

Some workers are migrating to Mexico for the winter, while others have taken other jobs. But even those who have found other employment are staying close to the strike. "Everyone knows if we lose they're going to cut wages all over the place," says Angel Carmona, a striker who has found well-paying part-time construction work but still works as a picket captain. "We'll survive as long as we have the support of the churches and the communities. If we can stay out another couple of months, we can win."

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FRANCE

American dollars can't cause scandal

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

ON NOVEMBER 27, THE FRENCH daily *Libération* devoted its first six pages to an exposé of "Reagan's secret funds in France." American taxpayers' money, appropriated by Congress to the National Endowment for Democracy supposedly to help groups struggling for "the return of democracy in totalitarian countries" or in "countries where democracy is still fragile," was being paid to several organizations in France, *Libération* disclosed.

The paper thought it had hold of a scandal on two counts. First, the condescending concern for "fragile" French democracy seemed misplaced. And second, a big chunk of the money went to an organization called UNI which is not particularly "democratic" by French standards.

The scandal envisaged by *Libération* was not—as it would have been not so many years ago—that American dollars were being used to interfere in French politics, so much as that they were being used to interfere *unwisely*. Yet even this scandal failed to take place. Nobody else in the press or the political class seemed particularly interested, and the story blew over in 24 hours. The French have changed a lot in 30 years. But the Americans, in their attitude toward France, seem not to have changed at all.

In fact, the same man is still distributing the Yankee dollars in France: Irving Brown, who on behalf of the AFL and the CIA helped anti-Communist labor leaders split the Communist-led General Confederation of Labor (CGT) in 1947 to form Force Ouvrière (FO), today the third-largest labor confederation in France. Brown is still hanging around Europe, channeling U.S. government money to his pals through the Free Trade Union Institute. Not surprisingly, then, FO showed up as the main beneficiary

of National Endowment for Democracy largesse, receiving \$830,000 of the annual total of a little more than \$1.5 million granted to French groups.

There was some confusion as to what the money was for. The National Endowment for Democracy and Free Trade Union Institute said the money given FO was for "union-building and organizing support for the largest democratic trade union in France." If so, this would amount to an interference in French affairs not only against the General Confederation of Labor but also against the Democratic French Confederation of Labor (CFDT). The American donors indicated the funds to FO were for "civic training," that is, to help teach the backward French such skills as parliamentary procedures, forming factions and how to organize a demonstration.

National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman told *Libération* that by strengthening FO his organization was strengthening democratic institutions because FO had to compete with the Communist CGT.

FO boss André Bergeron painted a more altruistic picture of the situation. FO used the American money, he said, to help the many fugitives from totalitarian persecution who find refuge in France. He gave the example of Polish Solidarity. A Solidarity representative in exile in Paris said the banned union got 80,000 francs per year from FO—about 1 percent of the National Endowment for Democracy gift. The rest was wholly unaccounted for, and no one knew whether or not it was included in FO's official annual budget. Yet no one seemed to care.

FO spokespersons dismissed the *Libération* exposé as part of the usual "propaganda of international communism that aims to destroy free trade unionism." This sounded pretty funny considering the notorious anti-Communism of *Libération* and the reaction to the story of the French Communists themselves.

CGT Treasurer Ernest Deiss rather surprisingly rushed to the defense of the rival FO by suggesting that the *Libération* story was timed to weaken trade unions about to do battle against the government's bill on "flexibility" of working hours. The CGT was not willing to let an old chestnut about Irving Brown interfere with its efforts to get FO support for its opposition to the flexibility reform.

In short, everyone seemed ready to dismiss the \$830,000 to FO as a token of past friendship granted for old times' sake. The other beneficiaries of the National Endowment for Democracy were another matter. *Libération* reported that \$570,000 of the money had gone to the Union Nationale Inter-Universitaire (UNI), which despite its name is not a "union" in the American sense but an ideological association linked to the far right. According to a recent parliamentary investigating commission, UNI was created as a "satellite movement" of the notorious SAC (civil action service), the para-military branch of Gaullism. SAC was officially dissolved in 1982, after being implicated in a mass murder that apparently settled a score stemming from a long series of undercover activities.

The scandal envisaged by *Libération* was that American dollars were being used to interfere unwisely in French politics.

Half a million dollars of U.S. taxpayers' money seems a lot to give to a group with only 500-1,000 members that got only 3 percent of the votes in the last French university elections in 1983. The Free Trade Union Institute claims to support UNI's "education and publication programs." UNI's most recent pamphlet called "The Church and Subversion," attacks the Catholic Committee Against Hunger and For Development for spreading "socialist ideology" in the form of "liberation theology that would better be called revolution." UNI denies it, but documents show it to be a

member of the World Anti-Communist League.

UNI led anti-Soviet demonstrations during Mikhail Gorbachov's recent visit to Paris, distributing more than one million stickers saying "Gorbachov-Gulag." Previously it carried out similar campaigns against the Mitterrand government with such slogans as "The left lies."

In its editorial accompanying the exposé, *Libération* commented that in retrospect, it was probably a good thing that Brown wrangled "a few suitcases of Marshall Plan dollars to counter Stalinist influence in the CGT." But it was unfortunate for FO's image—and for that of American policy—that its subsidies were mixed in with money for UNI, *Libération* said, marveling at the "curious misreading" of the French political situation and taste for "interventionism" on the part of American conservatives.

Libération itself exhibited no particular curiosity about the American conservatives who were dishing out the money, persistently misspelling the name of National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman as "Gersham"—the French press never cares how it spells foreign names—and not bothering to identify him as a leader of Social Democrats USA. Gershman's foreign operations, generously financed by Congress, can be assumed to be an attempt to put into practice the views developed by neo-conservative ideologues in the pages of the neo-conservative *Commentary* magazine prior to Ronald Reagan's election, tending to identify anything pro-Third World—example, the policies of former UN Ambassador Andrew Young—as anti-Israel. The main thrust of the right-wing social democrats is thus to oppose the disarmament-development line put forward by Willy Brandt in the Socialist International, and build labor support for the arms economy using the fallacious labor-directed argument that an arms buildup creates jobs.

How the million-and-a-half dollars distributed in France serves those or any other policy ends remains unclear. *Libération* suggested that UNI was serving as a channel for the money to reach an even less respectable destination. Gershman said the National Endowment for Democracy was suspending payments to UNI pending an investigation of alleged connections to SAC, but most of the money has already been spent.

The *Libération* exposé and the lack of reaction in fact served to show that the ideological battle against Communism in France is over. The right has won, and Uncle Sam can now put away his checkbook. ■

By Robert Good

MONTREAL

SURPASSING ITS MOST OPTIMISTIC projections, Robert Bourassa's Quebec Liberal Party won 98 of 121 seats on provincial elections on December 2, ending nine years of rule by the Parti Québécois (PQ). Although the word "dramatic" applies to Bourassa's comeback as Liberal Party leader (Liberals were ousted in 1976 by René Levesque's then separatist PQ), this campaign was striking mainly for its consistent blandness and ideological emptiness. The remarkable similarity of the two parties' platforms allowed a degree of voter indifference previously inconceivable in Quebec political culture.

With French language supremacy assured by Law 101 and English-Canadians forming lines to enroll their children in French "immersion" courses, budgetary concerns and economic stagnation have dislodged cultural nationalism from its once central place in the public mind. Yet by embracing free-market remedies with equal zeal, Bourassa and the incumbent PQ leader Pierre-Marc Johnson quickly reduced the election to a contest between Johnson's image—a comparison with Gary Hart is irresistible—and Bourassa's aptitude.

Bourassa's reputation as an economist and his six years' experience as prime minister recommended his Liberals over Johnson's "nouveau" but nebulous Parti Québécois. The 39-year-old doctor-lawyer has earned universal respect for his leadership of the post-Levesque PQ, but John-

son's inexperience and lingering ambiguity on the sovereignty issue produced a slight uneasiness in voters wearied by the volatile PQ years and eager to cultivate their gardens in a stable economic climate.

Bourassa's administration promises selective tax cuts and incentives for investment in the already substantial high-tech sector. Confident in the New England states as a market for energy, the prime minister envisions the expansion of the James Bay hydroelectric facility built during his first two terms in the early '70s. He also favors the concept of free Canadian-American trade, which federal Conservatives now imagine as the answer to Canadian economic stagnation. Canadian "fairness" forbade either Johnson or Bourassa from challenging Quebec's social welfare system, but Bourassa intends to institute a workfare program for those under 30 before granting them full adult welfare benefits.

The Quebec that awaits Bourassa's Liberalism has an 11.8 percent unemployment rate that exceeds Ontario province's by nearly four points. This condition inspired the socialist New Democratic Party of Quebec to wage a province-wide campaign that ultimately produced candidates

in 90 of 121 races and plainly affirmed state job creation as essential. While its less than 3 percent finish can hardly be deemed a breakthrough, it did manage 5 to 9 percent showings in a half-dozen priority races. And the New Democrats' disappointment was mitigated by their outpolling of all other minor parties.

The party was handicapped not only by its anglophone character, but by the PQ's continued capacity, despite Johnson's economic conservatism, to leave a populist and even social democratic impression with the electorate, and thereby deny the New Democrats of their logical constituency. The consumer protection measures, anti-scab legislation and welfare state enhancement of the PQ years have not been forgotten, and a residual appreciation exists for the openness and accessibility that the party brought to provincial government. The PQ that stood firmly against the demands of many public sector unions in 1982 and has presided over nine years of high unemployment still exudes a vague collectivism in which the state is viewed favorably and the public interest held sacred.

In winning the right to succeed former PQ leader Levesque last summer over more

populist and nationalist *pequist* contenders, Johnson infused the party's traditional collectivism with the spirit of free enterprise. He campaigned for greater cooperation of private businesses with crown corporations and favored investment incentives much like Bourassa's. Yet, together with his non-committal stand on the Canadian Constitution—which Quebec has yet to sign—Johnson's espousal of the entrepreneurial ethos helped to warrant the ultimately damaging perception that the new PQ was trying to be all things to all people.

Quebec has entered an age when many see the takeover of an Ontario business by a Quebec firm as the perfect expression of Quebecois nationalism. The ethic of self-reliance, individual initiative and enterprise has penetrated the province's culture so pervasively that young Quebecers now choose business curricula more often than their counterparts in the rest of Canada. The two main parties' regular worship at the altar of free-market economic growth was repudiated on December 2 by less than 6 percent of the electorate.

If Quebec's choice of the economically more conservative Liberals was a more or less predictable political alignment of the province with North America at large, the formerly left PQ's embrace of the spirit of capitalism signals a more fundamental change of public temper and ratifies the triumph of individualism and competitiveness over the traditionally collective and culturally based values of rural, Catholic French Canada. ■

Robert Good is a doctoral history student at McGill University in Montreal.

CANADA

Voters give Parti Québécois cold shoulder

FEAR OF KNOWLEDGE

By Pat Aufderheide

FOR YEARS IT HAS SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE to comprehend the Holocaust, whether at the level of statistics or the individual, whether as a historical, military or moral phenomenon. Merely to conjure up the thought is to squelch it with a phrase like "banality of evil," which media-banding has made banal in itself. But Claude Lanzmann's epic nine-and-a-half hour *Shoah* allows comprehension to merge from history.

Nine-and-a-half hours would be a long time to sit through a movie, if that's what you were doing. But from the first minutes, *Shoah* establishes itself as an intensely involving primary experience. It's not enough to be a viewer at *Shoah*—you're a participant-observer, guided by the expert journalist-filmmaker-philosopher Claude Lanzmann (one-time editor of *Les Temps Modernes* and protégé of Jean-Paul Sartre).

In his painstaking interviews with survivors of death camps in Poland and with ex-Nazis, Lanzmann asks them not to remember, but to relive, to retrace their steps and count them. We are invited not to judge, to pity or to suffer, but to hear and see and think. *Shoah* thus puts us on the road to understanding the inhumane and the monstrous as human and historical creations.

Lanzmann is not self-indulgent in giving us nine-and-a-half hours to do that. We need that much time, and he uses it in a way that justifies the judgment of filmmaker Marcel Ophüls (*The Sorrow and the Pity*) that *Shoah* is "the greatest documentary about contemporary history ever made."

The film focuses on the Holocaust at its most brutal point, the Final Solution's most completely realized form: the Polish death

camps—the factories whose product was death and whose production process was refined until even at the pilot project camps it was possible for 15,000 people to be deposited on ramps from freight trains and for every single one to be reduced to ashes within three hours. And for 15,000 more to arrive the next day. And the next.

One's first reaction is, "How could they do it?" But Lanzmann asks: "How *did* they do it?" Without pretending to be unbiased—Lanzmann is Jewish, served in the Resistance during WWII and is the author of a 1973 documentary film, *Why Israel?*—he stays resolutely at the level of the concrete, as if following the advice of historian Raul Hilberg, a featured interview subject in the film: "I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid I would come up with small answers; and I have preferred to address these things which are minutiae or details, in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt a picture.... I look also at the bureaucratic destruction process...as a series of minute steps taken in logical order and relying above all as much as possible on experience."

Accumulation of details

Fear of knowledge confronts Lanzmann everywhere, whether from the men who hide from the cameras or survivors who hide from memory. He asks questions that seem almost cruel in their technicality, their triviality, but that lead to shocks of insight. And he waits for the full response—not just the words.

Talking with a German security guard at Chelmno, where gas vans using truck exhaust killed hundreds at a time, he adds, "Did the driver sit in the cab of the van? Did he race the motor?" And then he asks, "Could you hear the sound of the motor?" And however resolutely that guard did not hear the sound, we do.

He talks to a barber who worked in the death details, cutting the hair of victims (the hair was later used as filler for textiles). As the man clips a customer's hair, Lanzmann asks him if he used clippers, and what kind of haircut the women got. Then he asks, "What did you feel?" The man says with flat resignation that "your feeling disappeared." Then, trying to explain why, he suddenly breaks down recalling a friend who had to cut his wife's hair. An eternity passes on screen while the man

fights for control. Lanzmann waits, then says quietly, "We must go on." They do.

His persistence, Lanzmann says, is a necessary violation. When his subjects crack, it is "an explosion of truth. It is as Spinoza said: The truth becomes true!"

His techniques have raised some eyebrows, especially those he used interviewing his Nazi subjects. For some, he used the name of a right-wing historian; and he paid some to talk with him. He even promised them he wouldn't use their real names as he filmed them in secret. Some of this winds up on screen, and we also see the crew monitoring secret transmissions.

In one sense, the question of journalistic integrity is answered in an interchange Lanzmann had with a neighbor of a gas van driver. Lanzmann said, "You know that he's responsible for the death of 60,000 Jews?" The woman replied, "Everyone's private life is his own!" And while he may have betrayed the trust of his Nazi subjects, he never betrays ours. The deceptions are never hidden. And exposed, they make the viewer decide the cost of what we learn.

Visually as well as verbally, Lanzmann dwells on the concrete. Repeatedly *Shoah* visits the death camps in bucolic forest settings, where only foundations of buildings remain, sometimes with monuments to the dead. The camera moves as slowly as a long gaze, peering at a dark muddy pool that was the dumping ground for crematorium ashes, descending the three short steps to what was the undressing room, traveling on the train tracks to the unloading ramps.

The trains—the cattle cars, the headlights, the same engines used for death transports—serve as a linking theme throughout the film. And the logistics of transport take us into the administration of mass murder. The switchman recalls the liquor bonuses he got to do the "special trains," and how they were never enough. The officer in charge of train schedules denies ever realizing they were moving death sentences. For him, they were a mass of regional relay problems. Polish farmers talk about seeing first-class trains full of rich Jews playing cards—an item of pure fantasy that has taken on the status of myth.

Some details yield larger results. It seems that the train companies charged the Nazi government for each passenger, and it got so expensive that the government finally arranged group rates. The travelers themselves paid, with confiscated goods. Hilberg tells Lanzmann that there was never any budget for the Final Solution—for train tickets or anything else. It was entirely self-financed.

Who knew what when?

Shoah observes a measured pace that never seems slow. The interviews are paced to establish a rapport, thus the moments of breakthrough never become emotionally exploitative. The circular patterns, the returns to the camps and to the interviews, mark layers of excavation in understanding. And there is a careful structure throughout the voyage into consciousness. The build-up of detail (What color were the gas vans?) reconstructs step-by-step the process—the packing into trains, the cattlecar journey in which a tenth of the passengers died, the dismounting, the herding into undressing rooms (What did they use to beat the women?), the gas chambers, the crematoria and graves.

We learn who knew what when. For instance, the daily stench over years for the neighboring Polish towns, the constant sight of Jews being herded into a local church that we see today during a mass. (The wife of a Nazi teacher says they didn't pay attention: "Gets on your nerves, seeing that every day. You can't force a whole village to watch such distress!")

Then we begin to learn about efforts to resist. The death-camp workers talk about their efforts to tell people what was going to happen to them. One worker recalls an attempted rebellion, and the decision of the Resistance officers—most of them non-Jews—to fight not for an end to the murders but for better camp conditions. A member

Losing the death struggle

The transcript of Shoah has been published, as Shoah: an Oral History of the Holocaust, by Pantheon Books (\$11.95). It is a superb complement to the film. (In the French edition, space was left for the silences in the film, something that would have enriched this edition). Following is an excerpt from the testimony of Filip Müller, survivor of the death details, describing the gas chambers:

You see, once the gas was poured in, it worked like this: It rose from the ground upwards. And in the terrible struggle that followed—because it was a struggle—the lights were switched off in the gas chambers. It was dark, no one could see, so the strongest people tried to climb higher. Because they probably realized that the higher they got, the more air there was. They could breathe better. That caused the struggle. Secondly, most people tried to push their way to the door. It was psychological: they knew where the door was, maybe they could force their way out. It was instinctive, a death struggle. Which is why children and weaker people, and the aged, always wound up at the bottom. The strongest were on top. Because in the death struggle, a father didn't realize his son lay beneath him.

And when the doors were opened?

They fell out. People fell out like blocks of stone, like rocks falling out of a truck. But near the Zyklon gas, there was a void. There was no one where the gas crystals went in. An empty space. Probably the victims realized that the gas worked strongest there. The people were battered. They struggled and fought in the darkness. They were covered in excrement, in blood, from ears and noses. One also sometimes saw that the people lying on

the ground, because of the pressure of the others, were unrecognizable. Children had their skulls crushed. It was awful. Vomit. Blood—from the ears and noses, probably even menstrual fluid. I'm sure of it. There was everything in this struggle for life, that death struggle. It was terrible to see. That was the toughest part.

It was pointless to tell the truth to anyone who crossed the threshold of the crematorium. You couldn't save anyone there. It was impossible to save people. One day in 1943 when I was already in Crematorium 5, a train from Bialystok arrived. A prisoner on the "special detail" saw a woman in the "undressing room" who was the wife of a friend of his. He came right out and told her: "You are going to be exterminated. In three hours you'll be ashes." The woman believed him because she knew him. She ran all over and warned the other women. "We're going to be killed. We're going to be gassed." Mothers carrying their children on their shoulders didn't want to hear that. They decided the woman was crazy. They chased her away. So she went to the men. To no avail. Not that they didn't believe her: they'd heard rumors in the Bialystok ghetto, or in Grodno, and elsewhere. But who wanted to hear that! When she saw that no one would listen, she scratched her whole face. Out of despair. In shock. And she started to scream.

So what happened? Everyone was gassed. The woman was held back. We had to line up in front of the ovens. First, they tortured her horribly because she wouldn't betray him. In the end she pointed to him. He was taken out of the line and thrown alive into the oven. We were told: "Whoever tells anything will end like that."

But Claude Lanzmann's epic nine-and-a-half-hour *Shoah* allows comprehension to emerge from history.

of the Polish government in exile recalls his contact with escapees, and his attempts to convince the Allies to take action. The film ends with interviews with surviving leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Details add up to conclusions. The "Holocaust"—a word Lanzmann dislikes, for its implications of natural disaster—was a historical process, trial-and-error solving huge administrative problems in the Final Solution. Jews were victims of a special sort: unlike others marked for death, they were to be annihilated—and that is the meaning of *shoah* in Hebrew—as a culture.

The Final Solution was an unprecedented approach to an ancient prejudice. The Jews were not passive victims, but they were abandoned—by Poles, by Resistance leaders, by the Allies—at critical moments. And the ancient prejudice lives on today. (When asked if he felt sorry about the Jews, one Polish farmer responded, "If you cut your finger, it doesn't hurt me.")

These are not conclusions of the objective journalist, but of someone passionately concerned with trying to incorporate the unimaginable recent past into the present. There are quarrels to be had with some of the conclusions; for instance, gypsies, among others, were equally marked with Jews for annihilation. But what Lanzmann has accomplished has expanded immeasurably our territory of knowledge.

Double reflection

Shoah is not "a movie," but it is a film, a work of art. Within an elegantly structured whole, a battery of techniques transmit the sense of what is said—and not said—in a way that goes far past the words and our resistance to hearing them. Lanzmann's conversations, far from the stereotypic "talking heads," are dramas of revelation. When conversations are translated into French from Polish, we hear the translator too, and subtitles translate the translator. It makes the process of hearing as noticeable as what is being said and forces a double kind of reflection.

When the camera travels back to the sites of the death camps, the steady pans become somber meditations. The attention to detail makes you think you see what you have heard. One viewer said it was the first time he had ever heard a baby cry in the gas chambers. And this is a film with not one foot of archival material.

Lanzmann describes his technique as "topographical, geographic, archeological." And his peculiarly appropriate style does get below the surface of our knowledge about the Holocaust. He has broken down the division between show and tell in documentary. And the camera acts as a vehicle for our thought process, not only as a stimulant to it.

For Lanzmann, the importance of what understanding happened to Jews in the Holocaust is not a matter of keeping the record straight, which is why he insists, "I did not make a historical film." He calls *Shoah* a "counter-myth," and "an inquiry on the present of the Holocaust." And that is one reason why he never considered using historical footage. Another is that what he has comes from Allied entry into concentration camps, not into the death camps in the East.

Watching *Shoah* gives you, among other things, an understanding of the immediate background of Israel today, for better and worse, although the film never makes the connection for you. And it makes you realize, as you watch the buried but still virulent knowledge of the Final Solution and the mechanical details of its surface, that the connection of social-sexual perversion to Nazi imagery is not accidental.

But most immediately what *Shoah* does is to bring the Holocaust back into history, and thus into our own present. It not only makes the horror thinkable, but makes it something that belongs to our history. Lanzmann started out with the outrageous premise that the Holocaust has a present, and by the end of the movie we know that's true.

©Pat Aufderheide



LETTERS

Nicaragua's state of emergency, seen from inside

WRITING FROM NICARAGUA, IT IS HARD to imagine how the U.S. can see this tiny nation as a threat. I am presently living with a Nicaraguan family, having come here in part out of curiosity, in part sympathy and in part to improve my Spanish. I have been taken aback by the Stateside coverage of the state of emergency decrees in Nicaragua and suggest a quite different interpretation. This is what I see.

It is clear that the Sandinistas do not enjoy unanimous support. Where I live, in Esteli, north of Managua, a substantial majority back the government, but there is a minority in quite vocal opposition. There is, however, virtually complete agreement on both sides that U.S. support of mercenaries and terrorists is Nicaragua's number-one problem. That is how the people I speak to describe the *contras*—as mercenaries and terrorists.

From the viewpoint of the people I meet here daily, the rationale for the state of emergency thus appears different from how it might look to someone in the States. It goes as follows: the country has been at war for four years, fighting against people armed and trained openly by the most powerful country in the world and with a history of bringing down regimes they disapprove of. Such threats to Nicaragua's stability are real and dangerous and require strong countermeasures. Thus the decrees.

In a country of less than three million (the size of Chicago), there have been 11,000 deaths in this war. In U.S. terms, that would equate to over half a million war casualties. No minor event.

For the average citizen here, the state of emergency regulations work like this. There is no curfew, no travel restrictions and no random ID checks. Political debate, meetings and publications of opposition groups continue. Demonstrations do now require a permit. Formerly they did not, but such a permit procedure is not unfamiliar to us in thoroughly democratic countries. Police may search without a warrant if they suspect terrorist activity, not unusual in other countries facing serious terrorism. Habeas Corpus is suspended for persons accused of terrorist activity, though not for others accused of crimes. The press is reviewed prior to publication and military or "destabilizing" articles may be censored. Still, all cen-

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sored material is open to public view. It is posted on the walls of the news offices, publicly and legally and routinely. Odd but true.

As for accusations that the church is being suppressed by the Sandinistas, I was in Esteli when Cardinal Obando y Bravo visited. Nobody was kept away, though he spoke quite openly and directly against the present government. It is important for Americans to know that there are two churches in Nicaragua at present. One actively supports the Sandinistas, the other, including the hierarchy, opposes them. During the past six years, the cardinal has dismissed more than 400 priests for their support of the Sandinistas. It is true that CORPROSA, an organization of the church hierarchy, was closed down. The reason given was that it had failed to reregister as a legal entity, and also that it was publishing destabilizing material. It was also accused of receiving its money from foreign sources and its leaders of supplying arms to the *contras*.

After the recent assembly debate, the emergency measures were made more lenient. A good sign, but was that reported in the U.S. press? It is critical to remember that many citizens to whom I have spoken believe that rights were being systematically abused in order to aid an armed attack against their legitimate government. They believe that attempts to create disorder, as part of a U.S.-backed plan to topple their government, required strong measures. Are they right? Are they wrong? I don't know, but I have sympathy for their dilemma; and a dilemma it is.

It is hard for me to make sense of what the American press and the current administration mean when they describe Nicaragua as a nation torn by internal dissent. The Sandinistas are now arming all those willing to receive training. If the internal dissent scenario were accurate, surely the people would use these widely distributed arms against the government, a chance the Sandinistas would be mad to risk.

Conventional wisdom here blames the U.S., my country, for the murder of 11,000 Nicaraguans, and for the continued state of war. The Reagan administration repeats and repeats that it is determined to bring

down the Sandinistas by whatever means necessary. The stories I have heard of *contra* torture are sickening and my country's role in such butchery causes me great pain. There is a great desire here for the U.S. to leave Nicaragua alone, to let the people here rebuild their country and to live in peace. I hope they get their wish and I would hope that my fellow Americans will do all they can to redirect our government's Nicaragua policy.

Nicholas Meier
Esteli, Nicaragua

Justification

IN REPLY TO A LETTER CRITICIZING ITS RATIONALIZATION of Nicaragua's restriction of civil liberties (*ITT*, Nov. 27), *ITT* trots out the dubious precedents of Eugene Debs' imprisonment in World War I and U.S. concentration camps in World War II. Certainly you don't consider these shameful episodes justified expressions of America's "right to defend itself as it deems necessary." Why should the Nicaraguans be excused from criticism of their internal policies? Would you have denied foreigners the right to criticize the U.S. concentration camps?

John Yates
Knoxville, Tenn.

Editor's note: Yates misses the point. There is no need to excuse Nicaraguans from criticism. There is a need to understand that even the most democratic of nations act in shameful ways during wartime, either out of genuine fear or, as in the case of Debs and thousands of other socialists and IWWs during World War I and the Japanese in World War II, in order to settle political or economic scores. The American examples are reprehensible, but they did not mean the end of American democracy. Similarly, the Nicaraguan crackdown should not be used to write off the Sandinista revolution, as many liberals have done. Further, in our view, the Nicaraguans face a much more serious situation than the United States faced in either world war. And that situation is caused by the U.S. As Americans we can do a lot more to help the democratic process in Nicaragua by fighting to end American intervention than by criticizing the

Sandinistas for defending themselves as they see necessary.

Left Protocols of Zion

IT IS A BIT IRONIC FOR FRANK SCOTT TO complain about the "cheap and divisive" headlines that accompanied Salim Muwakkil's article on Louis Farrakhan (*ITT*, Nov. 27). Those terms could better be applied to the anti-Semitic claptrap that filled Scott's letter, which sounds like a radical chic version of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Since when do Jewish bankers redline black communities? If Scott did his homework, he would learn that most redlining is done by savings banks, on which Jews are notoriously underrepresented. And as for Jewish landlords, they have owned a steadily declining percentage of properties in urban black communities since the '60s. Blaming the economic problems of American blacks on Jews is a rather bizarre position for a so-called leftist. But then again, as the old adage goes, "anti-semitism is the socialism of fools."

Mark Naison
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Fictional persons

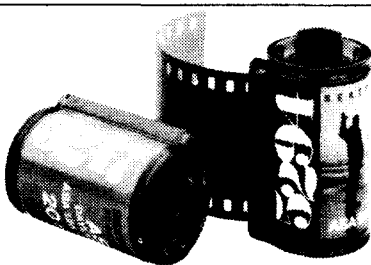
KIM LACY ROGERS AND THOMAS ZOUMARAS' syntax is confusing in their critique of U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese's speech at Dickinson College (*ITT*, Oct. 2).

They accurately point out that the policy implications of the *Slaughter-House Cases*, 83 U.S. (16 Wall.) 36, 21 L.Ed. 394 (1873) parallel those of the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Both decisions legitimated Jim Crow, thereby betraying the liberating potential of the 14th Amendment and effectively enslaving black Americans.

However, the *Slaughter-House Cases* did not define "corporations as individuals" as Rogers and Zoumaras might be read as saying. The word "person" in the 14th Amendment was not extended to fictional legal entities, such as corporations, until 1886. For the record, this particular reading, so conducive to the interests of corporate capital, came 13 years after the *Slaughter-House Cases* in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific R.R.*, 118 U.S. 394, 6 S.Ct. 1132, 30 L.Ed. 118.

James C. Foster
Corvallis, Ore.

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PERSPECTIVE

By Staughton and Alice Lynd

THE NOV. 11 *NEW YORK TIMES* ran a story, "U.S. Indians Enlist in the Miskito Cause," describing a news conference in Costa Rica at which Russell Means and two other American Indians announced they were joining the cause of Miskito Indians fighting the government of Nicaragua. Means, according to the article, hoped to recruit 90 to 100 "warriors from North America" for the struggle.

The *Times* quoted Means and his associates as saying the Sandinistas were subjecting Nicaraguan Indians to "continuing oppression" by a "racist, soulless Marxist experiment."

We are not experts on Nicaragua or on the problems of indigenous peoples, and we do not believe in writing rhetorical blank checks for overseas revolutions, but during a trip in August to northeastern Nicaragua where most Miskito Indians live, we formed a different impression.

Our conversations with a variety of spokespersons, analysts and ordinary Indians, as well as the written sources known to us, suggest that the Nicaraguan government, far from continuing to oppress Indian peoples there, is assisting those Miskito Indians who so desire to return to their homeland on the Coco River between Nicaragua and Honduras. In Puerto Cabezas, the principal city of northeastern Nicaragua, we talked with Miskito Indians who were passing through on their way back to the Coco River. We saw Miskito families and their belongings, loaded on a big Czech truck, leaving Puerto Cabezas for the river.

Also the government is endorsing "autonomy" for the Indian and Black populations concentrated in the Atlantic Coast region. (In addition to the approximately 70,000 Miskitos there are two much smaller Indian groups, the Sumus and Ramas. There are about 30,000 persons of African origin.) Autonomy has been a "taboo subject," according to Ray Hooker, a Creole educator from Bluefields who represents the Atlantic Coast in the National Assembly. "Two years ago if you spoke about autonomy you might have been accused of being a separatist, of wanting to establish an independent country on the Atlantic Coast." Today Hooker is one of five members of a national commission drafting a proposal on autonomy to be included in the new Nicaraguan constitution. A hand-written poster we saw in Cabezas described autonomy (in our rough translation) as follows:

What is autonomy?

Autonomy is...

- Equality of rights for ethnic minorities
- To elect your own authorities
- Education in your own language
- To have the right to land
- Respect for religion
- To keep the profits from timber in your own community
- To preserve cultural traditions

Concerning the Miskito Indians, we heard lengthy analyses from Judy Butler, a former NACLA editor who since 1983 has edited a magazine for the Center for Investigation and Documentation of the Atlantic Coast; Ray Hooker; Father Augustin Sambola, a black Catholic priest from the Atlantic Coast who has worked with the Miskitos in Waspan, Puerto Cabezas and the new settlements at Tasba Pri; and Rev. Norman Bent, a Moravian pastor from the Atlantic Coast whose father was a descendant of black slaves and whose mother was a Miskito Indian.

Northeastern Nicaragua is part of the Atlantic Coast, or Zelaya, region of Nicaragua. (Many Miskitos live in an area just north of the Coco River that until 1960 was a part of Nicaragua but is pre-

Sandinistas trying to cure Miskito errors

sently part of Honduras.) The Atlantic Coast region represents about 50 percent of Nicaragua's territory but contains only about 10 percent of its population. The Western or Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, where the capital city Managua is located, was colonized by Spain and is predominantly Catholic and Spanish-speaking. The Eastern or Atlantic Coast was historically dominated first by Great Britain then by American timber and mining companies. Many blacks on the Atlantic Coast speak English as their native language. Miskito Indians speak their own language, Miskito, and are predominantly Moravian.

Although the Atlantic Coast is relatively rich in natural resources, at present the standard of living there is the lowest in Nicaragua. Ambitious government development projects, such as a deep sea port at the city of Bluefields, are hindered by the war with the *contras*. Communication between Pacific and Atlantic Coasts is primarily by boat or small and ancient airplanes. One of our guides in Nicaragua was an engineer on leave from the work of building a new road across northern Nicaragua to Puerto Cabezas: he said that the road was intended to break down the cultural isolation of the Atlantic Coast, as well as for military defense.

The Atlantic Coast is also strategically important. Previous invasions of Nicaragua by the U.S. have landed there. If there is another invasion, Nicaraguans expect the pattern to be repeated.

Sandinista mistakes

According to Rev. Bent, the victorious Sandinistas energetically sought to bring the Revolution to the Atlantic Coast, but made many mistakes.

One, they imposed a revolution on the people, instead of creating one. Two, they imposed leadership upon the people and ignored the authentic, local leadership. Three, they were culturally insensitive. They were not sensitive to the problem of racism. Four, they wanted to consolidate the Revolution too rapidly: it took 20 years to raise consciousness on the Western side of the country, but the Sandinistas also contributed to the isolation because during their struggle against Somoza they never tried to include the East Coast in their struggle.

Other accounts (for instance, "The Miskitos and the Atlantic Coast" by the Instituto Historico Centroamericano) suggest that conflict arose between the central government and the Miskitos precisely because, from the beginning, the

government encouraged activities such as the literacy campaign in indigenous languages which brought political demands in their wake.

The government at that time apparently viewed these Miskito political demands as separatist. In February 1981, it arrested the leadership of the organization of Atlantic Coast indigenous peoples, Misurasata. ("Misurasata" is derived from "Miskito," "Sumu," "Rama" and "Sandinista.") Eight persons were killed during one of the arrests. After the arrested leaders were released, about 3,000 Miskitos followed Misurasata leader Steadman Fagoth to Honduras. There they began military activity against the Sandinista government, in cooperation with *contra* forces already based there.

By late 1981, military activity along the Coco River had become intense. The central government decided to evacuate Miskito villages along the river, and this took place beginning in January 1982. About 10,000 Miskitos chose to go to Honduras. Another 8,000-10,000 moved about 50 miles south to five resettlement villages collectively known as Tasba Pri. Some scattered elsewhere. The villages left behind on the Coco River were destroyed.

There seems to be no question that the Reagan administration—through the CIA—actively encouraged whatever separatist and anti-Sandinista sentiment existed among Miskitos, in the same way that the Green Berets trained remote indigenous groups in IndoChina to fight against the National Liberation Front. According to Judy Butler and others, the CIA had hoped to utilize the Miskitos in Honduras to declare a provisional anti-Sandinista government in northeastern Nicaragua early in 1982.

In 1984-85, the Nicaraguan government changed its policy toward the Miskitos. Negotiations were begun with Miskito spokespersons in and out of Nicaragua, including Brooklyn Rivera, a Misurasata leader based in Costa Rica. An amnesty was declared, releasing Indian prisoners to return to their families, and open to refugees who had left the country. Autonomy for the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast, including Miskito Indians, was proclaimed as public policy. A tacit cease-fire among all groups of Miskitos came about in early summer 1985. Most tangibly, the government is allowing the villagers that were resettled in Tasba Pri to go back to the fire line of the Coco River.

Miskito refugee camp with Misura guerrilla.



Oscar Manuel Mayorga

er, the border, from which they were removed in 1982.

An elated Rev. Bent told us: "Squeezed from both sides, yet not defeated, we became victorious. After two years of negotiations we were able to demand [that] the Sandinistas become humble, bravely humble; to accept their mistakes." Bent assessed the mood of his people as they began to return to the Coco River this way:

"The villages were totally destroyed, but the people's morale is very high. They are going back to their history. They are going back to their culture. They are going back to their land: Mother Earth. They are going back to the river, which means life to them.... For us, this is one of the most positive moves of the Revolution."

Indeed, Bent, Hooker, anthropologist Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz and others believe that Nicaragua may yet create a model for other nations in its treatment of indigenous peoples. According to Bent, the autonomy project is a "Fourth World Revolution," which will be relevant wherever "Indians are living under inhuman conditions."

Miskito critics

In contrast, Miskito Indians with whom we spoke in Puerto Cabezas had little good to say about the government and its programs. One told us:

Of course every individual from the Rio Coco wants to go back home in peace and freedom and to have what is theirs. The freedom, the rights that we want are: to be able to have our own land; to be able to sleep free, to eat free, to go wherever we wish to freely, to go back to wherever we want; to have our own parcels of land; to cut down our own trees, and make our own homes; and be able to work freely, as it was before. Politics are now a bunch of lies. We are being tricked. The Sandinistas say, look, these are your chickens and these are your pigs, they belong to you; but they don't really. We are not free to do what we wish. What we want is to have freedom to work as we please, to have our own. We want the Sandinistas to say, Here, take this, take care of it, it's yours, so that we can take it upon ourselves to do this.

We are inclined to believe that the grievances of the Miskito Indians are well-founded in their experience. We met dedicated and idealistic persons working at all levels of government to improve the life of the people. But we came away from the Atlantic Coast with the sense that the needs and problems were so great that it might be impossible for any government adequately to respond to these problems, infinitely compounded as they are by U.S. intervention.

On reflection, it seems the more extraordinary that the Nicaraguan government should be assisting so disaffected a group as the Miskito Indians to return to the border between Nicaragua and Honduras. There the returnees will be just across the Coco River from thousands of Miskitos in Honduras whom they regard as their own people, many of whom have fought with or supported the *contras*. The government must be hoping, first, that the fragile cease-fire will hold and, second, that life can be made sufficiently bearable on the Nicaraguan side of the border to forestall a mass exodus to Honduras. The optimum outcome might be a situation in which Miskitos of all persuasions agreed to stop killing each other, whether on behalf of Washington or Managua, thus demilitarizing the border area de facto. A totalitarian government is presumably one that fears the unplanned, spontaneous and decentralized, and seeks to control all activity. The Nicaraguan government's present policy toward the Miskito Indians appears the reverse: a colossal gamble, almost an experiment in nonviolence.

Staughton and Alice Lynd practice law in Youngstown, Ohio.

PERSPECTIVE

FSLN stifles internal democracy

By Stephen F. Diamond

IN THE MOST SERIOUS BLOW against civil liberties yet imposed by the *Frente Sandinista*, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega announced on October 15 severe restrictions on the rights of Nicaraguan citizens in both their public and private lives. The move appeared to shock many in this country who have been working to reverse the U.S. government's policy of supporting the *contra* rebels' illegal war against the democratically elected regime of the FSLN. Those November 1984 elections—recognized even by the Vatican as fair—had provided activists here with a strong weapon against the arguments of the Reagan administration, and his allies among Democrats and certain labor leaders, to end U.S. intervention in the Central American region. The decrees dealt a major blow, in particular, to the years of work by many American trade unionists to put this nation's labor movement on record as opposed to the administration's Cold War support for the *contra* forces.

"The state of emergency hurt our ability to create a dialog on this issue within our unions," Keith Johnson, president of the International Woodworkers of America and a key supporter of the National Labor Committee in Support of Human Rights in El Salvador, told me. Speaking a week after the AFL-CIO's historic compromise on policy toward Central America (ITT, Nov. 13), he expressed his "hope" that

the emergency "is lifted as soon as possible, so that life can go on in a normal way." He was joined in his criticism of the Sandinistas by Dolores Huerta, vice president of the United Farm Workers, who told a conference sponsored by the San Francisco Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice that "we have to oppose the arrests of Nicaraguan trade unionists just as we would oppose such arrests in this country."

These concerns are being echoed inside Nicaragua by an unusual coalition of the six opposition parties, ranging from the right-wing Democratic Conservatives to the far left Popular Action Movement (Marxist-Leninist). A joint statement issued by the six parties condemned the State of Emergency and argued that the restrictions "deny and obstruct" political pluralism in the country. They state that by closing avenues of peaceful opposition in the country, the state of war makes the end of the war against the *contras* more difficult. With this move, the close relationship between the FSLN and three of these six parties comes to an end. That alliance had been formally organized in the Revolutionary Patriotic Front (FPR), made up not only of the FSLN, but also of the Popular Social Christians, the Moscow-recognized Socialists and the Independent Liberals. Though the FPR split up to allow each member party to run candidates in the November 1984 elections, the parties each continued open support for the FSLN-led "revolutionary process."

Many North American supporters of the Sandinistas defend the imposition of the state of emergency as necessary to resist CIA-backed destabilization efforts allegedly underway inside Nicaragua. But terrorism has always been illegal in Nicaragua and there has been no explanation by the *Frente* why such acts cannot be dealt with under normal legal procedures.

The government's war against the *contras*, in fact, has been very successful. Government spokespersons announced recently that the *contras* "are in strategic decline, they are trying desperately not to die as a political and military option." The *Frente's* optimism was highlighted this fall when they exempted certain rural areas from the military draft which has been in effect nationally since 1983. And yet, a Catholic newspaper and radio station were closed for advocating precisely such a move.

The major concern for the FSLN is not the war from the north, but the potential war at home with its own "popular base" among workers and peasants. The disastrous economic costs of the war, estimated now in billions of dollars, combined with the strong tendency among key Sandinista leaders toward authoritarianism, have caused growing dissent among thousands who once backed FSLN.

The FSLN's political power and economic survival has always depended on a careful balancing between the demands of a democratic mass movement of workers and peasants for higher wages, more land and greater social expenditures with the needs of a profit-seeking free enterprise sector. The latter still controls 60 percent of the economy. Until this past summer, popular discontent about the nation's plight was usually expressed indirectly. The FSLN received, for example, fewer votes than expected in the 1984 elections, but nonetheless received a comfortable majority. Sandinista union officials have been generally successful in convincing workers not to strike for higher wages and better working conditions. Instead, the Jesuits' Managua-based Central American Historical Institute (IHCA) notes, "worker discontent is rather manifested as low productivity through individual absenteeism or indifference."

Shift of priorities

With the November mandate behind them, the Sandinistas undertook a series of measures aimed at both tightening internal party structures and turning back from the regime's heavy commitment to social spending. The IHCA describes a series of changes in the duties of government officials aimed at the "unification of government and party leadership in one person, Daniel Ortega." These political moves run parallel to a marked shift in concessions to the private sector at the expense of workers and landless peasants. Prices paid for agricultural goods by the state have been pushed upward, growers are now allowed direct access to dollars for importing machinery and financial credits have been increased. The regime is attempting to introduce a piecework system, tying wage gains to output. The Sandinista industrial union, the CST, is backing this effort. Public investment in all areas other than defense or health has been cut back. Spending on education has been frozen for the first time in five years. The IHCA concludes that "the new economic policies are causing the cost of the war to fall even more heavily on the workers and poor peasants in the short term. In addition to the economic costs, they are also paying

with the lives of their sons. These unequal sacrifices are leading to the progressive radicalization of the fundamental classes of the revolution."

Until the past six months, this "radicalization" was largely confined to expressions of frustration with the bureaucracy or the high lifestyles of some Sandinista leaders. But slowly groups on both the right and left of the FSLN have been able to organize open dissent. The Church has been the key force on the right with now-Cardinal Obando y Bravo leading a series of masses-cum-rallies in key cities. Obando shocked the Sandinista movement by drawing tens of thousands of supporters to an airport arrival in Managua from the Vatican last spring. Obando had been elevated to Cardinal by the Pope and led a procession from the airport into the capital.

The far left

On the left, the Socialists, Communists and MAP-ML have all been increasingly active. The three parties staged a protest rally outside the National Assembly Hall hours before the Emergency was announced in support of their delegates' efforts to maintain the traditional "13th month" bonus paid all Nicaraguan workers. When the FSLN measure cutting the bonus went through over the objections of five of the six opposition parties, Socialist Alejandro Solorzano, head of the Construction Workers Union, called for a hunger strike. He became one of the first victims of the State of Emergency when the regime threw him in jail for 20 hours.

Comments by FSLN leaders since the imposition of the decrees make clear their concern with such union protests. Comandante Bayardo Arce fears "internal destabilization" might be triggered by a coffee pickers' strike. He labelled the agitation of the three left parties as "political myopia." Vice President Sergio Ramirez fears strikes led by businessmen, such as those used by the mass movement to overthrow the Somoza regime. "These are situations we are going to confront with the State of Emergency," he concluded.

Ironically, the Sandinista government received marks of praise from the IHCA just prior to the imposition of the Emergency. "Today popular criticism represents an effective form of pressure to promote democratization.... [The government] is also committed to heeding popular criticism," the Jesuits wrote in September. In particular, they argued that such a democratic commitment was the key to undermining the potential for a Chilelike destabilization effort: "Popular uprisings have not occurred in Nicaragua, even when the counterrevolutionaries are able to occupy isolated mountain communities for a few hours.... The internal anti-Sandinista front the Reagan administration wants to create through the economic crisis is prevented from developing by the many legal channels for dissent."

But now those in the FSLN with strong authoritarian tendencies like Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge, who has been pushing for these restrictive measures for some time, appear to have gained the upper hand. In one step, the FSLN has stifled internal democracy, provided the Reagan administration with one more excuse for its illegal war and seriously hampered the efforts in this country to build a movement for a democratic foreign policy. The U.S. Congress will review its aid to the *contras* in March. Between now and then, the U.S. anti-intervention movement must speak up clearly and firmly for democratic rights here and abroad. That is the only way it can fight with any credibility for an end to the war against our Nicaraguan brothers and sisters.

Stephen F. Diamond, a labor educator living in the San Francisco Bay area, is completing a book on the Nicaraguan revolution.

Illustration by Nicole Hollander



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IN THESE TIMES, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657

Champion: Joe Louis, Black Hero in White America

By Chris Mead
Scribners, 330 pp., \$18.95

By Lester Rodney

THE NAME OF JOE LOUIS, who died four years ago, no longer resonates as it once did. America's short historical memory has relegated the fabled "Brown Bomber" to the mistiness of the Olden Times along with Dempsey, Tunney, Corbett and Sullivan. Probably helping this process is the fact that the dubious sport of boxing no longer makes front-page headlines. The world heavyweight champion in 1935 is scarcely a household word.

Yet the same forgetful America constantly surprises those who pessimistically simplify it, as Chris Mead demonstrates in *Champion*. Mead, son of a wire-service sportswriter, became interested in Louis while studying history at Yale. After graduating *magna cum laude*, he devoted a year to research and interviews for this book. Joe Louis is a difficult subject, especially for one who wasn't around when the uneducated Alabama fieldhand and River Rouge laborer burst into larger-than-life prominence in the mid-'30s.

It was a time of lynchings with automatic acquittals, black voter disenfranchisement, hotel and restaurant discrimination South and North. *Birth of a Nation*, Stepin Fetchit and faithful fat mammies were the black images in the movies. *Readers Digest* featured an article entitled "Why Joe Louis Must Never Be Champion."

When Louis disregarded that wisdom and knocked out Jim Braddock to become champion in 1937, baseball, our "national pastime," was a decade away from ending its largely unquestioned ban against blacks.

A good biography of Joe Louis would understand this social context, place him in it and trace his impact upon it. It would have to cut far deeper than the papier-mache, miniseries-type portrait of a splendid young man who overcame the odds, won popularity, KO'd the bad German, played a patriotic role during the war and lived happily ever after. It would have to deal with the fact that Louis was not a militant and articulate fighter for civil rights the way Jackie Robinson and Muhammad Ali were and that the U.S. Army used him in World War II to try to hide the racist realities confronting black soldiers in army posts.

Yet it would understand and make clear that Joe Louis did not have to be recognizably militant in his time to have an electrifying, transforming effect. His defeat of every representative of the oppressing race was militance enough. Blacks in the '30s didn't care that he avoided offending white sensibilities out of the ring. (They understood that.) Essentially, a good biography would have to grasp that, as Richard Wright wrote, "From the symbol of Joe Louis' strength Negroes took strength, and in that moment all fear, all obstacles were wiped out, drowned." More difficult to trace is Louis' impact on many sports-conscious whites whose smug ideas of racist superiority were shaken.

A true biography would also note that Louis was not just the non-conscious medium, that he gradually realized what he meant to his people and in his own way

acted upon that knowledge. This was particularly true during the war years. Among other things, he helped end some of the more blatant racism at Fort Bragg, N.C.

As a reviewer who covered almost all of Louis' fights and spent many hours with Joe, and probably predisposed to find inadequacies in the work of a young biographer who wasn't there—I must report that Mead has, in the main, measured up to the task.

On target

Perhaps because he is *not* an old timer awed by the famous old names, Mead is refreshingly unsycophantic toward the journalists of the day. He unearths the racist reactions to Louis by Grantland Rice, Paul Gallico and John Kieran, the pundit of the *New York Times*.

Even that prototypical feature writer Meyer Berger succumbed to the reigning stereotypes, writing, "A physician...compares the bomber to a primordial organism, says in temperament he is like a one-celled beastie of the mire-and-steaming-ooze period. Fighting, he displays boxing intelligence tantamount to the stalking instincts of a panther...he becomes sheer animal." This pervasive need to make Louis something less than human arose largely because in this sports-conscious land he was sup-

rior to the mightiest white man.

Mead properly points out that Louis always resented being called animal-like and a killer—someone born to fight. But he misses the boat completely on Joe's mother, Mrs. Lily Barrow Brooks, who he presents as "a comfortable stereotype for white writers." More assiduous research would have revealed that this brave woman was a community leader who often walked picket lines and spoke for better black housing in Detroit, despite her own happy but unique good fortune.

About her son's image, Brooks told this writer: "He'd come home from work [at the River Rouge plant] dead tired, eat some supper and go on back to the gymnasium. All that foolishness about being a natural and born fighter...nothing comes natural without hard work and I saw my son work hard at it and get mighty discouraged and keep going."

Mead also tends to overstate Louis' abstention from politics. Although it wasn't widely known,

he spoke freely on political issues with those he knew well enough to trust. Louis helped the New York Newspaper Guild by making an appearance at a time when that union—and unionism itself—was not all that "respectable." And he made a \$100 contribution to the Henry Wallace campaign in 1948 after listening to a Progressive Party speaker in Harlem.

Louis was a catalyst of black pride.

The book is also uncharacteristically careless and shallow in its brief reference to the ending of baseball Jim Crow. It leads off with of all things, sports scribe Jimmy Cannon of the *New York Post* denouncing baseball discrimination on national radio with Drew Pearson, as if this was some kind of breakthrough. This brave gesture was in 1946, the year before Jackie

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Robinson, already with the Dodgers' Montreal farm team, was to advance to the big leagues, and was 10 years after the black press, joined by the Communist press, launched a major campaign in the face of silence by the *Post* and all other daily papers.

Though there is much interesting and well-rounded detail on Louis' dramatic encounters with Max Schmeling, the book winds up a bit soft on Nazi Maxie. Mead quotes the German fighter describing how bad he felt being snubbed in New York. A huge picture of Hitler in his study and his long silence on Nazi policies entitles Schmeling to as much respect as a South African golfer who says he is not "political" and refuses to comment on apartheid.

At home in Las Vegas

Champion is informative on Louis' latter-day financial problem and the reasons for it, and is perceptive in understanding that Louis did not feel victimized as a Las Vegas greeter in his last years, but truly enjoyed meeting people and basking in recognition of who he was and what he had accomplished—a natural enough feeling, even if one that didn't square with the horrified reaction of many old friends. The book's section on the war is outstanding, showing how the average American confronted the Nazis with the self-righteous feeling that *they* weren't prejudiced like that—a contradiction, as Mead points out, that continues today.

With a book like this going for \$18.95 in the age of the computer replacing people who worked with knowledge, pencil and pastepot, it is apropos to point out a series of boobies. The World Series, Mead says, was first broadcast in 1927. I heard the 1924 series over a home-made crystal set. Pompton Lakes, Louis' training camp for many fights, is put in New York rather than New Jersey. The word "prosports" is used twice. Anyone know what it means? Heywood Brown's name is misspelled, and Louis made a "peronal appearance." Tsk, tsk, Scribners.

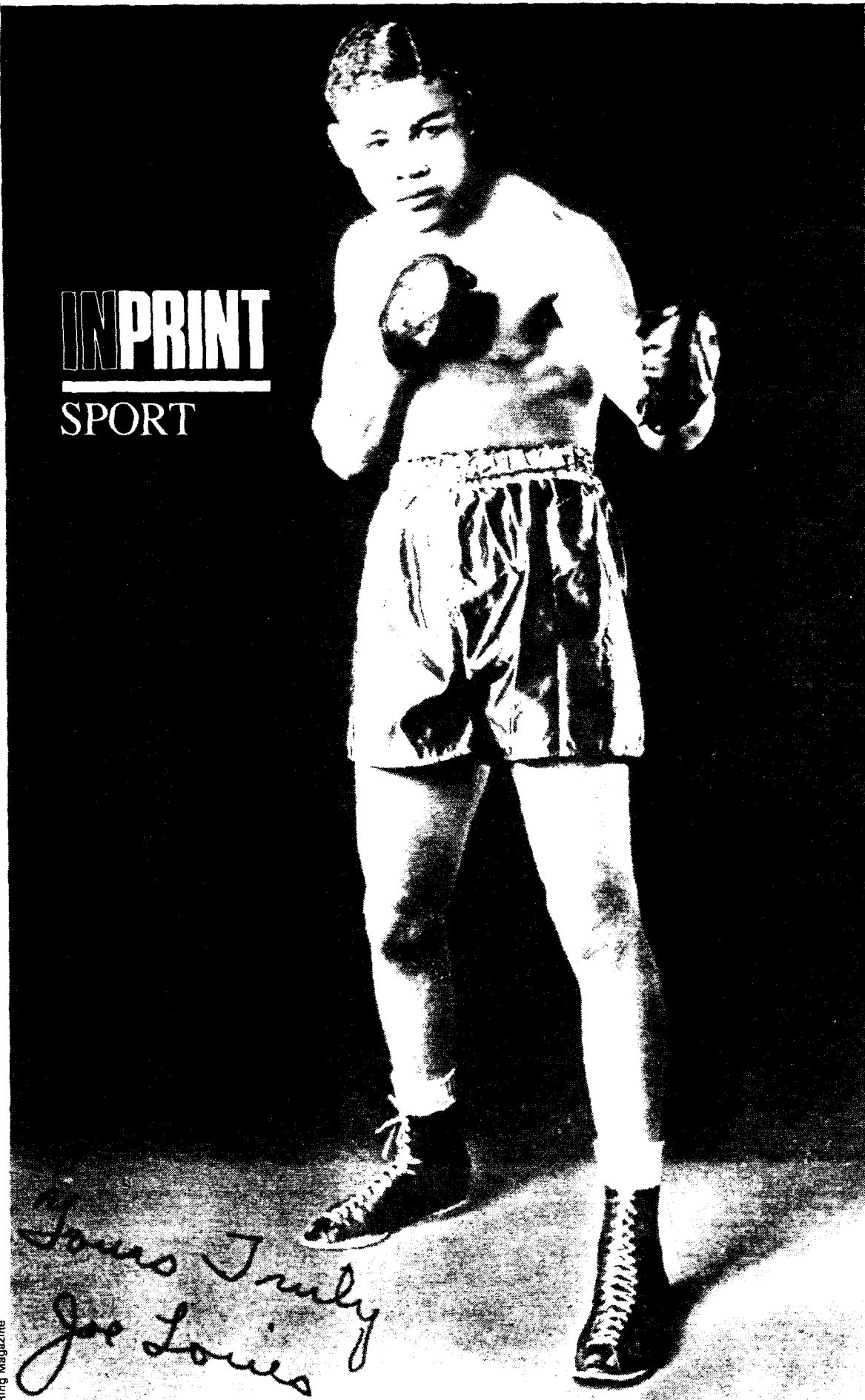
Secondary carping aside, Mead's good sense of history serves him well throughout the book. He grasps the profound difference between eras in these fast-changing times. At the end, Joe Louis must have seemed an anachronism to many young blacks. He was critical when Cassius Clay joined the Black Muslims and changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

Louis said he could never go along with the idea that "all white people are devils," and added, "The way I see it, the Black Muslims want to do just what we have been fighting against for 100 years. They want to separate the races."

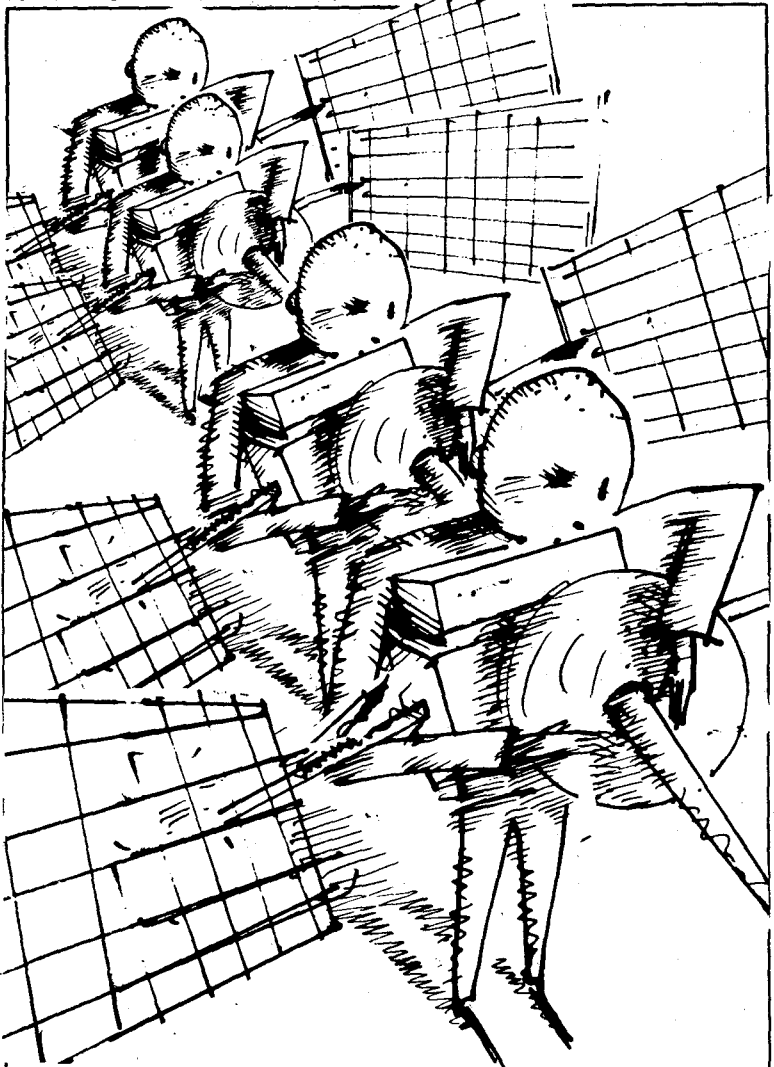
He remained an integrationist, a '30s man at a time when blacks moved into a timely emphasis on self-esteem and pride (which also educated many, if not enough, whites). Yet Louis was a major catalyst in the emergence of militant black pride as Mead rightly notes.

At the memorial service to Louis at Caesars Palace sports pavilion in Las Vegas, Jesse Jackson of the new generation, given the middle name Louis by his parents, said it with his customary eloquence: "You made everybody somebody. Joe, we love your name."

Lester Rodney covered Joe Louis' fights for the *Daily Worker*.



More than just a regular Joe



Peter Hannan

COMMUNICATIONS

Parking spaces for satellites

By Donna A. Demac

IMAGINE THAT CITY COUNCIL representatives of densely populated Manhattan were able to work out a plan that gave every household its own parking space on the street. While this scenario is unbelievable, a similar event recently took place in relation to another area of public property: outer space.

As a result of last summer's World Administrative Radio Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a United Nations agency, all countries in the world are to be guaranteed a minimum of one parking space, or orbital slot, in the geostationary orbit. The orbit is 22,300 miles from the earth, where satellites remain in a constant position relative to points on the earth's surface. Most communication satellites are placed in this orbit because the possibility of continuous transmission in any 24-hour period eliminates the need for constant tracking or substitute satellites.

The 1985 conference was the latest development in international negotiations over the imbalance in access to communication resources. Over the last two decades, media domination and the uneven distribution of information and communication facilities have become issues for international politics. The call for a New World Information and Communication Order is part of the larger context of the ITU conference. The growing importance of satellites for a variety of commercial, public welfare and governmental objectives gives international satellite regulation a particular urgency.

Twenty years ago, outer space was declared the common heritage of mankind, an international treaty declared that frequencies and orbital

slots necessary for satellites cannot be owned. This principle drew little attention as long as only a few countries were involved in space activities. As more and more countries—including Brazil, Mexico and China—have joined the satellite club through owning satellites or leasing channels, however, the allocation of orbital positions, which is done through the ITU, has become highly complex.

As developing countries join the satellite club, awarding orbital positions becomes more complex.

In 1979, fearful that a few industrialized nations would dominate the best orbit space, developing nations got the ITU to agree to reconsider its procedures for distributing positions in the orbit. The ITU decided to hold a two-stage conference to revise the regulatory framework. The first of these conferences was the 1985 WARC; the second will be held in 1988.

Delegates from 110 of the 160 ITU member nations and representatives of 25 international organizations, including the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT), attended the conference to explore ways of assuring "equitable access in practice" to the coveted orbit space.

The initial U.S. stance was to reject orbit reservation and to con-

tinue to allocate positions on a first-come, first-served basis.

Other countries called for a *priori* planning, ranging from seven-year to indefinite assignments. Stanley Malumbe, head of the Kenyan delegation, described the existing system as "indiscriminate and catastrophic" and said that planning was the only way to establish an effective access guarantee. Not all developing nations agreed. Since 1979 several developing nations, including China, Brazil and Mexico, had become satellite-owning states; now they are as concerned as some First World countries to protect existing arrangements. As a result, no clear platform emerged from the non-aligned countries. Over the same period, some developed countries, including Australia, Japan and Canada, had become more receptive to at least limited *a priori* planning.

The third big change since 1979 was that the U.S. and several other countries had encouraged more commercial competition in the delivery of information and communication services. These changes were already affecting international satellite communications. Most notably, the basic global satellite network, INTELSAT, which historically received strongest support from the U.S., was facing challenges from several U.S. corporations that planned to compete in the delivery of international satellite transmission. These companies had received endorsements from the White House, Congress and the Federal Communications Commission.

Delegates at the conference were divided in their views of ways that this important development would affect their own access to affordable satellite services. Again, the alliances did not fall neatly along North/South lines, but rather according to the strength of national industries and how quickly countries were proceeding technologically.

At the end of a long and difficult five and a half weeks, the conference arrived at a hybrid agreement. A limited *a priori* reservation scheme was adopted that would permit each country to satisfy requirements for national services from at least one orbital position, within a predetermined portion of the orbit and on predetermined frequency bands. For those frequencies and orbital positions not subject to *a priori* planning, improvements are to be made in ITU procedures that should accommodate latecomer nations. In addition, planning is to take account of the needs of systems such as INTELSAT.

The results of the conference will not be effective until the 1988 conference and amount to only a bare outline of any plan that could possibly assure "equitable access in practice." Yet they point toward some historic changes in the role of the ITU as an international regulatory agency and in the strength of the developing nations in this organization. In the communications sphere it is clear that strategic thinking will be key to achieving more equitable conditions for access to the parking spaces required for domestic and international satellite transmission.

*Donna Demac is a lawyer who attended the WARC. She is author of **Keeping America Uninformed: Government Secrecy in the 1980s** (1984) and co-author of **Equity in Orbit, A Background Paper on the 1985 ITU Space WARC.***

MUSIC

Pop's aesthetics of possession

By Simon Frith

I'M READING AN INTERVIEW with Green Gartside of Scritti Politti. I've never much liked his music, but I've always been absorbed by the project. Scritti Politti were the most *right on* of the post-punk, post-structuralist British groups. Self-righteousness oozed through the murk of their early clatter. Even do-it-yourself recording became, for them, an aggressive ideological gesture, its anti-hegemonic significance spelled out on every record sleeve.

Ah, the art school class war. Green moved on, of course. He signed a half-million-dollar deal with Virgin and bought the exclusive rights to the Scritti name (his original partners just got their final payoff). He writes familiar tunes now, his voice floating over carefully layered rhythmic programs. He's no longer a Marxist, though he continues to be a smart aleck, dropping French names (a single called "Jacques Derrida") and concepts (his publishing company is called *Jouissance*) like any good reader of *Enclitic*.

So, anyway, here's Green Gartside sitting pretty in the Sunday *Times* color supplement, in the "people" slot. He's wearing a button-down shirt and a tie, a young executive, alert and in control, and he's being profiled as a symbol. Green means success, 1985-style. The stars look down over new captions: fragments of Barthes and Wittgenstein interpreted by copywriters. The reading of the pop text (deconstruction) comes before the writing of the pop text (image), so this is an interesting interview, but I keep getting stuck on page two: "Before having his picture taken for this article a fee had to be negotiated with Virgin Records for his make-up artist."

It's harder and harder these days, reading interviews with British pop stars, to place them as musicians. They come across, rather, as advertising people, skilled at design and clothes and packaging (trained at art school), bringing in the sound makers (Gamson, Maher, the rest of the New York session teams) after the creative event. All the musicians do is give

the drawing board "product" its material, commodity form—as a record.

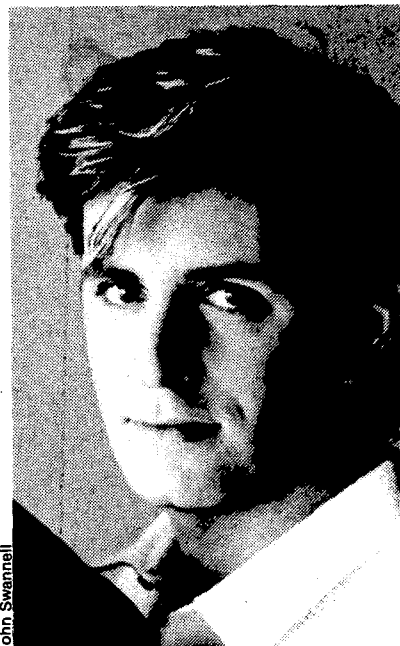
I don't care that Green has "sold out." If he gets rich from his well-educated grasp of consumer fetishism, good luck—in terms of political correctness, I'd take pop artifice over rock naturalism any day. What interests me is a different question: what is he selling?

Back to the interview. "I asked if he knew who bought the product? Green replied that the singles were bought mostly by young girls." Another memory occurred to me: Nick Heyward's first solo tour after he left Haircut 100 to become a serious star. The band, the bouncers and I are the only adults there, the only men. Heyward is intense despite the din. The little girl standing next to me takes a new pair of panties from a Marks and Spencers bag and throws them on the stage. Heyward takes off his jacket; the screaming lifts the roof.

Green, like Heyward, is selling himself. His voice/image/body is the public site for pubescent fantasies. Music matters only as the vehicle for these fantasies; music mediated, that is, by a personality, by a star who seems to give his listeners intimate access to their own feelings. Green's "use value," what makes his records sell, is his appeal as someone who can be *possessed*, materially in scrapbooks and on bedroom walls, erotically in dreams.

This is the traditional function of the teeny-bop idol, and it's certainly arguable that the only difference between Green and David Cassidy is that Cassidy didn't explain his sex appeal by references to Foucault and Deleuze. For me, though, such knowingness about pop's "desiring machinery" marks a loss. The joy of teenage pop isn't confined to teenagers (nor to adults wishing they were teenagers), but "a perfect pop record" (Green's goal) works *despite* its packaging—"Karma Chameleon," for example, touched people who hadn't the faintest idea who Boy George was or what he looked like. Good pop is heard obliquely; it offers unexpected versions of feelings we never knew we had. What's "good" here usually is described by its straight musical elements (a haunting tune, etc.), but what matters is a tone of voice: suddenly there's this stranger, involved in a different conversation altogether, talking about you.

The aesthetics of pop rest on the musical tension of familiarity/novelty, but its emotional effects come from the play of recognition and surprise. Current British teen music mostly has got the balance wrong. There are certainly moments of recognition, but since the early days of Human League, Altered Images and ABC, with the rise of consumer theorists, there's been less and less surprise. Every time I hear Scritti Politti's "The Word Girl," I think, "Aaah, what is this?" And then, every time, I think, "Oh, yeah, it's Green." ■ *Simon Frith is a British sociologist.*



Green Gartside is still name-dropping.

Nicaragua

Continued from page 16

sary because the education ministry seeks to "indoctrinate" students—from promoting war games in pre-schools to employing Marxist analysis in university economics classes.

"The association provides a means for parents to keep tabs on what goes on in the schools," Cisneros says, "which is vital today because they [the Sandinistas] want children to believe Nicaraguan history began in 1979 with Somoza's overthrow. They want them to think our only friends now are the socialist countries."

As a vocal critic, Cisneros has run afoul of government authorities who claim his criticisms go too far. In May, he was detained briefly by security forces after making outspoken statements in the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*. He says authorities beat him during the arrest.

Ministry of Education officials respond to Cisneros' statements by saying he and other critics "live in the world of the past.... The opposition has lost power, and now they want to return to the ideology that used to pervade schools in Somoza's time," says Daniel Trejos of the state ministry. "I recall learning that Sandino was a bandit, that everything American was good, that people were poor because they were ignorant. Education in the past denied our reality."

Up-front ideology

Teachers at Miguel de Cervantes public high school in Managua echo Trejos. "In countries such as the U.S., as under Somoza here, schools seek to hide the class nature of power," says math teacher Francisco Avilez. "In our teaching today we cannot deny our proper reality. Of course, we transmit certain ideas to the students. But don't they do that anywhere? The difference is that they claim no ideology exists in their schools, while we do not hide that fact."

"We do not talk of Marxism, but of what we are living," says social studies teacher Luis Malespin. "The students know about the war, about the U.S. and Sandino, they have seen the exploitation of the peasants

in the past. Our history revolves around U.S. interference in our affairs, which we cannot avoid discussing. That is not Marxism, but an examination of the exploitative nature of our history."

The school also reflects the current deteriorating economic situation in Nicaragua. Most classrooms have no windows, there aren't enough chairs and the school has few maps or other resource materials.

The only visible signs of Marx at the high school is a large portrait of him in the office reception room. But there was no secret as to the theory being imparted in Noel Ortiz' sophomore economics class.

"The worker only has his labor power to sell, and production in capitalist enterprises results from the combined work of thousands of workers," the young teacher tells his 20 students, who dutifully copy the lesson in small notebooks. "This fundamental contradiction within bourgeois societies manifests itself in two classes, the capitalists and the workers."

"This is what the students have seen; it is not just theory," Ortiz says later. In another class, Ortiz teaches history students that Columbus' discovery of America resulted from the fall of Constantinople and the need to find a new commercial route to India. He also says the discovery opened up "the brutal exploitation of our continent as adventurers came seeking riches, fame and glory."

It is the teaching of debatable historical explanations as absolute truths that education critic Cisneros says he objects to most. "Students learn these things as being without question. This is an extreme, similar to the one we lived under in the Somoza period," he says.

Javier Lasera, the Jesuit principal of Managua's private Centroamericana High School, where Cisneros' teenage son is a student, claimed Cisneros is the one going to extremes. "I understand his concerns, but I think he and his group have lost sight of what happened in Nicaragua. And things have changed. Any group in power is going to convey something of their orientation to students; our job as educators is to seek equilibrium."

He says his school does that by presenting different themes in classes and, as a

private Christian school, continuing to teach religion, even as state officials try to end it. "We do feel pressure to get religion out of the schools, but, being a Christian institution, we cannot do that," he says. "All students here get two hours of 'faith' per week, whether the inspectors like it or not."

Both Lasera and the principal of another private Catholic school say their teachers can improvise on the curriculum mandated for all schools, which requires a certain number of hours for different subjects. He says any government has such requirements.

But teachers must also demonstrate that they are following a precise, day-to-day schedule when inspectors visit. He attributes this rigid schedule to the inexperience of lower-level education officials, and not to their ideological orientation.

Lasera says the branch of Cisneros' parent association at his school supports the improvised curriculum, which demonstrates that flexibility is still possible in private institutions.

Cyclical pressure

At the other private school, classrooms display religious pictures and symbols. The school principal, who requested anonymity, says the pressure on private education goes in cycles. "Last year they would come each month. Now they come perhaps three times per semester," she says.

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She admits that her staff enjoys a flexibility that teachers in public school do not have, but that running the school has become increasingly difficult in the past few years. The problems, she says, reflect the situation in the country overall.

"I see this most in my seniors. What do I tell them as they prepare to leave this sheltered environment for that uncertain future?" she asks, sitting on a bench on the attractive, shady campus. She also emphasizes that "the day they tell us we cannot teach religion here, this school will close."

Principal Lasera expressed confidence that state officials will never be able to prohibit such instruction, or impose stricter teaching guidelines. As evidence, he points to a fact he says many critics overlook: that Minister of Education Fernando Cardenal is himself a priest. "When they were considering who to name as minister, I know other ideologically hard-line people were under consideration," Lasera says.

"To me, the fact that they named a man like Cardenal says a lot about education in Nicaragua today," the educator adds. "And we should never lose vision of what the people have gone through here. This is a revolutionary society now."

William Gasperini is In These Times' correspondent in Nicaragua.

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Reading and writing

& revolution

Will Nicaraguan schools get back to basics?

By William Gasperini

“WHO IS KARL MARX?”, THE TEACHER asks. The students look at him with blank stares. “Does anyone know, then, who Fidel Castro is?” he asks.

More blank stares. A few shake their heads. “Then who can tell me who Augusto Sandino is?”

All of the grade-school students raise their hands.

“Yo soy Sandino,” they say. I am Sandino.

The scene could be repeated in almost any school in Nicaragua today. It reflects the changes that have resulted from the revolution bearing the name of Sandino, and the identity students have for him. Sandino led a small army fighting against U.S. Marines occupying Nicaragua in the '20s.

The scene also sheds light on the continuing controversy over ideology in Nicaraguan education, where critics of the current

Sandinista government charge that Marxist-Leninist themes dominate in schoolbooks and classes. The state education ministry responds that ideology pervades any educational materials, and that teaching of Sandino is Nicaraguan history, not Marxism.

Looking through primary school textbooks, one finds numerous references to the Sandinistas, but no mention of Marx or Lenin. But in history classes students do learn of how the Spanish conquerors enslaved the Indians, and that the subsequent struggle against *explotacion* has characterized the country's subsequent history.

Students also learn the Sandinista hymn and of their duties in the new Nicaragua: “We children are the future of the revolution. We must help defend it against aggression. We must take care of our homes and school, conserve water and electricity...”

At the same time, grade-school texts contain stories of baseball, shopping in the market,

animals in the woods. In other words, they are reading selections one would encounter in any schoolbook the world over.

“The point, however, is not that they make explicit mention of Marx, but that emphasis is now on class struggle, U.S. ‘imperialism’ and that everyone must be a good Sandinista,” says Sofonias Cisneros, the leading critic of current education in Nicaragua. Cisneros heads the Association of Parents of Christian Schools (an organization similar to North American PTAs) that involves parents of children attending most of Nicaragua's 80 private schools.

Each school forms its own group, Cisneros says, providing parent input into their children's education. This, he says, is necessary because the education ministry seeks to “indoctrinate” students—from promoting war games in pre-schools to employing Marxist analysis in university economics classes.

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Steve Cagan